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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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'Names of 65 lakh voters deleted in Bihar published'

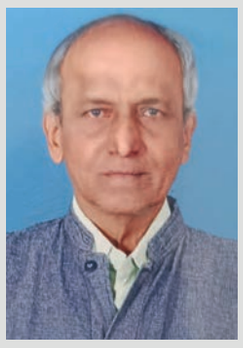
NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Following the Supreme Court's directive, the Election Commission has published the list of 65 lakh names deleted from Bihar's draft electoral rolls on district magistrates' websites, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar said Sunday. The special intensive revision (SIR) aims to ensure accuracy in the voter list ahead of upcoming polls. The draft roll, released on 1 August, remains open for claims and objections until September 1, allowing voters and political parties to seek inclusions or exclusions. Kumar emphasised the decentralised electoral process, with Electoral Registration Officers and Booth Level Officers responsible for roll accuracy. He also condemned misinformation being spread about the SIR exercise, stressing its importance for clean and transparent elections in Bihar. *—PTI*

Kannada activist Sudarshana no more

MYSURU, 17 AUG

Veteran Kannada activist Sa Ra Sudarshana died on Sunday at the age of 73. A tireless champion of the language for over five decades, he was actively involved in the Gokak movement and was jailed for three days during the agitation. He served as the General Secretary of the Kannada Kriya Samithi and co-founded the Nrupathunga Kannada School in Ramakrishnanagar. A postgraduate in geology, he was deeply committed to the promotion and protection of Kannada. He is survived by his daughter, Nudi Sudarshan, a theatre personality and engineer. As per his wish, his body was donated to a hospital. *—Salar News*



Andaman gears up for cyclone, tourist urged to stay away

PORT BLAIR, 17 AUG

The Andaman and Nicobar administration has issued a Local Cautionary Signal-3 warning at ports after a cyclonic circulation developed over the Bay of Bengal, expected to intensify from Sunday evening. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast heavy rainfall, thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds up to 40kmph over the islands until Monday, with sea conditions likely to turn rough to very rough. Fishermen, ships, trawlers and small boats have been barred from venturing into the sea across South Andaman, North and Middle Andaman, and Nicobar districts. Tourists have been urged to stay away from the shore. Officials said emergency teams and equipment are in place, while commuters and travellers have been asked to plan journeys cautiously. *—PTI*

Prove 'vote chori' in 7 days: EC to RaGa

EC says claims will be baseless after 7 days

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar on Sunday issued a seven-day ultimatum to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to submit a signed affidavit supporting his allegations of 'vote theft' in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, warning that failure to do so will render the claims baseless and invalid.

Speaking at his first press conference since Gandhi's accusations, Kumar demanded the Congress leader either apologise to the nation or back his charges with legally required evidence. He was llanked by Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi.

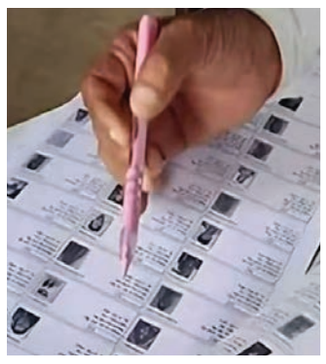
The announcement coincided with the launch of Gandhi-led opposition's 'Vote Adhikar Yatra' in Bihar. Kumar defended the SIR exercise as essential to remove shortcomings in voter lists ."

Gandhi's claims, first made in a 31 July press conference, alleged over 1 lakh votes were stolen in Mahadevapura Assembly segment.

Acknowledging possible discrepancies in electoral rolls, Kumar emphasised that SIR is the only legal way to correct them. He clarified that a person appearing on multiple voter lists does not equate to multiple voting.

He urged all parties to report errors in Bihar's draft electoral rolls by 1 September.

He said many voters live in informal or unauthorised settlements, under bridges or near lampposts, and the EC ensures no voter is left out by assigning appropriate identifiers. AThe CEC stressed that having a voter's name listed in multiple places does not imply that person voted more than once. He reaffirmed that nationality, age (18+), and proximity to the polling booth are the primary eligibility criteria, not address alone. *—PTI*



CEC Gyanesh Kumar slammed Rahul Gandhi and said he shared photos of voters without their consent ***PHOTO: PTI AND X***

NOTIONAL NUMBER

EC said lakhs of houses in rural areas lack house numbers, so EC assigns a "notional number" of zero to such addresses to avoid excluding voters.

RaGa's 'Vote Adhikar Yatra' starts in Bihar

Says nation knows EC & BJP stealing votes

SASARAM, 17 AUG

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday launched the 1,300 km 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' from Sasaram, Bihar, accusing the Election Commission of colluding with the BJP to "steal elections" through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Joined by RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, and other INDIA bloc allies, Gandhi claimed the ongoing SIR process was the "latest conspiracy" to rig the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections.

"In the entire country, elections are being stolen. In Bihar, they want to delete and add voters to manipulate the outcome. We will not let them steal this election," Gandhi declared, standing atop a jeep driven by Yadav.

He questioned why the EC demanded an affidavit from him following his earlier 'vote chori' claims, but not from BJP leaders making counter-allegations.

Congress Chief Mallikarjun Kharge said the yatra was a fight to protect democracy and the people's right to vote. RJD Chief Lalu Prasad, despite ill health, made a brief appearance urging unity to "defeat the BJP-RSS and save democracy", ending with chants in support of Gandhi, Kharge, and Tejashwi.

Yadav called the SIR a tool to disenfranchise marginalised voters and accused the BJP of trying to "snatch Ambedkar's right to vote." Other INDIA bloc leaders slammed the EC for holding a press conference the same day instead of addressing prior objections. The 16-day yatra, combining foot and vehicle travel, will conclude in Patna on 1 September. It will traverse over 20 districts. *—PTI*

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav during 'Voter Adhikar Yatra' in Sasaram in Bihar on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Fresh cloudbursts hit J&K & Himachal again; 7 dead

KATHUA/ MANDI, 17 AUG

Severe weather caused by heavy rains triggered cloudbursts, landslides, and flash floods in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district and Himachal Pradesh's Mandi district, resulting in seven deaths in J-K and widespread damage in both regions.

In Kathua, two separate incidents early Sunday claimed seven lives, including five children. A cloudburst struck Jodh Ghati village of Rajbagh, killing five residents, including Surmu Din, 32, and his two sons aged six and five. The event also damaged numerous mud houses and cut off access to the village. In Bagra village of Janglote, a landslide caused by the rains killed a mother-daughter pair, Renu Devi (39) and her nine-year-old daughter Radhika. The Army evacuated six injured individuals to hospital, including women and children. These tragedies follow a similar cloudburst in Kishtwar district on 14 August, which left 60 dead.

Meanwhile, in Mandi district, Himachal Pradesh, heavy downpours led to landslides and flash floods in Panarsa, Takoli, and Nagwain. No fatalities have been reported so far. Rescue teams are active across the affected areas, urging residents to avoid rivers and streams. The Kiratpur-Manali National Highway is blocked by waterlogging. Flash floods from the overflowing Shalanal stream caused the collapse of a office's boundary wall, narrowly missing employees.*—PTI*

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Army personnel during a search and rescue operation at a cloudburst-hit village in Kathua district on Sunday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Putin agrees to security protections for Ukraine

NEW YORK, 17 AUG

A day after meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska, US President Donald Trump sparked speculation with a cryptic Truth Social post on Sunday: "Big progress on Russia, stay tuned."

Special US envoy Steve Witkoff later confirmed a major breakthrough. Speaking on CNN, he revealed that Putin agreed to allow the US and European allies to offer Ukraine NATO-style security guarantees. This marks the first time Russia has accepted such a framework, which Witkoff described as "game-changing".

He added that Moscow also pledged a legislative commitment not to seek further territorial expansion in Ukraine.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen welcomed the move, praising Trump's backing for Article 5-like assurances and confirming the EU's readiness to contribute. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed cautious optimism, calling for clear roles for the US and EU in implementing the guarantees. He also linked them to Ukraine's EU membership bid. Witkoff defended Trump's decision to drop immediate ceasefire demands, citing broader progress. Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned no deal would proceed without Ukraine's involvement and cautioned of consequences if talks collapse. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

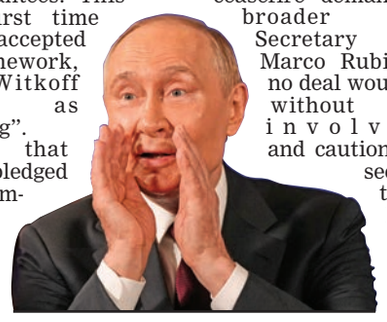


PHOTO PTI

Radhakrishnan named NDA's VP candidate

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) on Sunday named Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan as its candidate for the upcoming Vice Presidential election, scheduled for 9 September.

The announcement was made by BJP National President JP Nadda following the party's Parliamentary Board meeting in New Delhi. Nadda said the decision was taken unanimously after consultation with NDA allies. "We will also reach out to the opposition to ensure a smooth election process," he added.

Radhakrishnan, a veteran BJP leader, is currently the 24th Governor of Maharashtra, a post he assumed in July 2024. He earlier served as Governor of Jharkhand and held additional charges as Governor of Telangana and Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry.

He was twice elected to the Lok Sabha from Coimbatore and formerly led the Tamil Nadu BJP as state president.

The Vice Presidential post became vacant after Jagdeep Dhankhar resigned on 21 July, citing health reasons. The Election Commission has set 21 August as the last date for filing nominations and 25 August for withdrawal. Voting and counting will both take place on 9 September.

Radhakrishnan's nomination sets the stage for a high-stakes contest as opposition parties are expected to announce their candidate soon. *—ANI*

>>>More on Page 3

Dacoits loot jewellery shop, kill man in Mandya

A gang of dacoits looted Mahalakshmi Jewellers in Kirugavalu, Mandya, on Sunday, killing a 72-year-old hotel owner who witnessed the crime. Madappa, owner of a nearby hotel, was attacked and had his throat slit when he stepped out on hearing noise around 2 am. The gang escaped with gold worth Rs 13 lakh and took the CCTV DVR to destroy evidence. *—Salar News*

YouTuber Elvish's house attacked by gunmen

GURUGRAM, 17 AUG

Two masked gunmen fired over two dozen rounds outside the residence of YouTuber Elvish Yadav in Gurugram's Sector 57 early on Sunday morning, police said. The incident, captured on CCTV, showed two bike-borne men stopping outside the house around 5.30am before opening fire. One of them was seen leaning over the main gate and continuing to shoot before both fled the scene.

Yadav, who was not at home, escaped unhurt. Several family members were inside at the time but no injuries were reported. According to police, the bullets struck both the ground and first floors of the house. A forensic team was deployed to collect evidence, and CCTV footage from the area is being examined.

Hours later, gangsters Neeraj Faridpur and Bhau Ritoliya, alleged members of the 'Bhau gang', claimed responsibility on social media. In their post, they accused Yadav of promoting betting apps and warned other influencers involved in such activities of possible attacks. Police, however, have not officially confirmed the gang's claims. *—PTI*

US-India trade talks called off indefinitely

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

A scheduled visit by US trade negotiators to New Delhi from 25–29 August has been cancelled, delaying progress on a proposed bilateral trade agreement and extinguishing hopes of relief from new American tariffs due to take effect from 27 August.

A source with direct knowledge of the matter said the negotiations will be deferred, although no fresh dates have been set. The US embassy in New Delhi confirmed it had no additional information, while India's trade ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Earlier this month, President Donald Trump announced an additional 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods, citing India's continued imports of Russian oil. *—PTI*

WHERE ARE WOMEN SAFE?

Delhi man rapes his mom after accusing her of 'bad character'

NEW DELHI, 16 AUG

A 39-year-old man allegedly raped his mother in central Delhi's Hauz Qazi area after she returned from a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, police said.

According to officials, the complainant, accompanied by her 25-year-old daughter, approached the Hauz Qazi police station and alleged that her son, Md Firoz alias Suhel, had assaulted and sexually abused her.

"The woman stated that she had travelled to Saudi on 25 July with her husband, 72, and their daughter. During the trip, her son called her husband and accused her of having a 'bad character', demanding that his father divorce her," a cop said.

On 1 August, after the family returned, the accused assaulted his mom and attempted to attack her again. Fearing for her safety, she went to stay at her elder daughter's in-laws' house. "On 11 August, when she returned home, her son locked her in a room, threatened her with a knife and scissors, and raped her," the officer added. Around 3.30am on 14 August, the accused allegedly repeated the act. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Yellow Line trains to run from 5am on Monday

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Namma Metro's Yellow Line services will commence at 5am on Monday, the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited announced on Sunday. In view of an anticipated rise in passenger traffic following the extended Independence Day weekend, the first trains will depart from RV Road and Delta Electronics Bommasandra stations at 5am on 18 August. The corporation has urged commuters to utilise this early service for hassle-free travel. Services on the Purple and Green lines will continue to operate from 4.15am on Mondays as per existing schedule, it added. —*PTI*

Woman ends life after govt clears land encroachment

MYSURU, 17 AUG

A 55-year-old homemaker committed suicide by hanging self at her residence after Hanur taluk administration cleared encroachments of government land the woman was cultivating at Kempaiahanahatti in Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Sunday. Police said, the deceased has been identified as Rajamma of the village. She was survived by four daughters, & was cultivating 20 cents of government land for several years at her village. On Saturday, taluk officials cleared the encroachments, fenced the boundary for construction of BR Ambedkar Bhavan. The villagers held a protest, keeping her dead body and threatened not to perform her last rites until the land is returned.
Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support. —*Salar News*

Woman commits suicides after spat with husband

HUBBALLI, 17 AUG

A 31-year-old woman, married just three months ago, was found dead by hanging at her home in Nandgokul Layout, Hubballi, on Sunday morning. The deceased, Jayashree Badiger, had married Shivanand in May. The couple was living in a rented house. According to police, Shivanand, who works at a private firm, was allegedly in a 13-year-long relationship with another woman — a fact he had reportedly not disclosed to Jayashree. The woman in the affair had called Jayashree and informed her about their relationship, which led to repeated arguments between the couple. A quarrel was reported on Saturday, and Jayashree was found dead the next morning. Jayashree's parents have filed a complaint with Gokul Road police, alleging that their daughter was mentally harassed by her husband and suspecting his involvement in her death.
Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support. —*Salar News*

2 City cops held after falling into Rs 1L bribe trap

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Two police officers from Ramamurthy Nagar police station and a private individual have been caught red-handed while allegedly accepting a Rs 1 lakh bribe, Lokayukta officials said on Sunday. The accused were identified as police inspector Rajshekar, 4; sub-inspector Ruman Pasha, 32; and an individual, Imran Babu, 32, of Devara Jeevanahalli. Officials said they were caught on Saturday while accepting bribe out of the demanded amount, and the money was recovered. The complainant, Manjunath, 47, resident of KR Puram, approached officials alleging that the accused had demanded Rs 2 lakh to investigate a complaint on domestic dispute over missing jewellery & cash. —*PTI*

BJP and Cong spar over Dharmasthala excavation

Vijayendra leads delegation to Dh'sthala, meets Heggade

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

A political war of words erupted on Sunday between the ruling Congress and Opposition BJP over the ongoing excavation in Dharmasthala, triggered by allegations of multiple murders, rapes, and secret burials, particularly of women and girls, over the past two decades.

BJP State President BY Vijayendra led a party delegation to Dharmasthala, where they offered prayers at the Manjunatha Swamy and Annappa Swamy temples and sought blessings from 'Dharmadhikari' Veerendra Heggade.

Vijayendra reiterated BJP's support for the State government's Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe but demanded action against those spreading "false propaganda" about the temple. "We don't want to interfere in the SIT probe, but the propaganda on social media is hurting lakhs of devotees. The government must investigate the people and groups behind it," he said.

BJP State President BY Vijayendra led a party delegation in Dharmasthala
PHOTO: X/BY Vijayendra

He also accused Leftist groups of pressuring the government into forming the SIT and cited Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's earlier comments about a "big conspiracy" behind the episode. The BJP, he added, wants clarity on the complainant's identity and the alleged falsehoods being circulated.

Shivakumar countered the BJP's visit, calling it a "Political Yatra" aimed at scoring points. "This isn't a Dharma-Yatra or religious visit. Why were they silent when the SIT was formed?" he asked, accusing the BJP of encouraging Hindu groups that initially targeted Dharmasthala.

Excavation work near the Nethravati river was paused on Sunday. The operation was launched after an anonymous complaint from a former sanitary worker alleged "hundreds of burials" around the pilgrimage site.

Home Minister G Parameshwara is expected to make a statement in the Assembly on Monday, following BJP demands for clarity and action against the complainant.

The political storm shows no sign of calming, with both parties standing firm on their narratives. —*PTI*

BENGALURU BUILDING FIRE

DyCM DK Shivakumar, along with City Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh, BBMP Commissioner Maheshwar Rao and others, visits the fire accident site at Nagarathpet in Bengaluru on Sunday
PHOTO: Mohammed Asad

Owner held; DKS says will raze illegal buildings

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday blamed illegal constructions for the devastating fire in Bengaluru's Nagarathpete that killed five people, warning that unsafe buildings will face demolition if not reinforced.

"All these are illegal buildings. If owners don't strengthen them, we will demolish them," Shivakumar said, announcing Rs 5 lakh compensation for each victim's family. The victims — Suresh, Madan, Sangeetha, and children Mitesh and Vihaan — were from Rajasthan.

Police arrested the building owner, Balakrishnayya Shetty, and his son, Sandeep Shetty, charging them with unauthorised construction, absence of safety measures, and negligence. The fire erupted around 2.30 am on Saturday in the ground-floor warehouse of a plastic goods unit and spread rapidly. Most residents escaped, but a family of four and a neighbour were trapped and died.

Madan Singh, who ran the unit manufacturing plastic kitchenware and mats, had rented the premises for nearly a decade and lived on the top floor with his family.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh confirmed safety norms were violated and extra floors added illegally. "We've arrested the building owners. The fire likely started due to a short circuit," he said.

Meanwhile, another blast in Wilson Garden on Friday killed one and injured nine. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced Rs 5 lakh compensation and free treatment for the injured. Rescue teams continue clearing debris and investigating both incidents. —*Agencies*

Darshan's wife to manage his social media

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa's wife Vijayalakshmi on Sunday said she will be managing his social media accounts to keep fans updated and promote his films while he remains in jail.

In a post on X, she wrote, "My Dear #DBoss Celebrities, your Challenging Star carries each one of you in his heart. Until he returns to connect with you directly, I will be handling his Social Media, to share updates and movie promotions on his behalf."

She added, "The love, prayers, and patience you continue to show give him and our family immense strength. Let's hold on to that unity and positivity — he will be back soon, with the same love and energy you've always known. With gratitude and love, Vijayalakshmi Darshan."

Darshan, popularly known as the 'Challenging Star', is currently in jail in connection with the Renukaswamy murder case, alongside his friend Pavithra Gowda and several others.

The Supreme Court recently cancelled his bail, leading to his re-arrest. The actor and his associates are accused of murdering Renuka swamy, a fan from Chitradurga, for allegedly sending obscene messages to Pavithra on social media. —*PTI*

Priyank says Savarkar first proposed 2-nation theory

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Minister Priyank Kharge has stirred controversy by asserting that the concept of the two-nation theory was first articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, not Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Posting on X to mark Partition Horrors Remembrance Day, the IT and Biotechnology Minister stated, "The idea of Two Nations was first floated by 'Veer' Savarkar and his 'tukde tukde gang' endorsed it."

Kharge referred to Savarkar's writings and speeches, noting that in Essentials of Hindutva (1922),

PHOTO: ANI

Savarkar defined Hindutva not solely by religion but by the idea of India as both 'Fatherland and Holyland'.

He highlighted Savarkar's 1937 speech at the Hindu Mahasabha's 19th session in Ahmedabad: "There are two antagonistic nations living side by side in India... Hindus and Moslems."

Further, he cited Savarkar's 1943 statement in Nagpur: "I have no quarrel with Jinnah's two-nation theory. We, Hindus, are a nation by ourselves... Hindus and Muslims are two nations."

Questioning BJP's stance, he quoted Ambedkar: "Savarkar and Jinnah... are in complete agreement... both insist there are two nations in India."

Kharge, son of Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, used it to draw ideological link between Hindutva thought and Partition. His remarks provoked sharp reactions online, with supporters and critics debating historical interpretations. —*PTI*

Cong serves notice to MLA for leadership change jibe

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Congress on Sunday issued a showcause notice to Channagiri MLA Basavaraju V Shivaganga for his recent statement suggesting that Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar would become the next Chief Minister after December.

Shivaganga's remark — "After December, DK will become the Chief Minister"— made during an interaction with reporters in Davangere on Saturday, has reignited leadership speculation within the party. This comes despite Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's recent assurance that he will serve his full five-year term.

The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) Disciplinary Committee, taking serious note of the comments, said they had caused "confusion and embarrassment" within the party.

In a notice issued by Disciplinary Committee coordinator Nivedith Alwa,

PHOTO: FB

Shivaganga was asked to respond within seven days. "These public statements amount to a violation of party discipline," Alwa stated.

Deputy CM and KPCC president DK Shivakumar expressed strong displeasure over the MLA's repeated remarks.

"Despite several warnings, Shivaganga has continued to speak on the CM post. This is unacceptable," Shivakumar said, calling it a clear violation of party lines.

Party leaders have been instructed not to fuel speculation or make statements that might create confusion within organisation. —*PTI*

THE PIGEON WHISPERER

A woman feeds pigeons sheltered in a vacant lot near Tulasi Park, Upparpet, in Bengaluru
PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Work begins on Rs 48.32 cr district complex in Bidar

BIDAR, 17 AUG

The long-pending demand for a modern District Administrative Complex in Bidar is finally taking shape, with construction officially launched on Saturday. Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister and Bidar District In-Charge Minister Eshwar B Khandre, along with Municipal Administration Minister Rahim Khan, performed a pooja at the site of the old Deputy Commissioner's office to mark the start.

The Rs 48.32 crore five-storey complex will be built on 5.275 acres. Khandre noted that CM Siddaramaiah had laid foundation stone on 16 April. The first phase will see construction of eight office blocks, with rest in second phase. Khan added that Rs 200 crore has been requested for Corporation, with plans to appoint an IAS officer and recruit 400 staff.—*Salar News*

WITH $2.8B INVESTMENT

Foxconn's Bengaluru unit begins iPhone 17 production

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Taiwanese electronics giant Foxconn has commenced operations at its new factory in Devanahalli, near Bengaluru, with small-scale production of the iPhone 17, sources said. This marks the beginning of manufacturing at Foxconn's second-largest facility globally and its second iPhone production site in India, after its Chennai plant.

The City unit, built with an investment of USD 2.8 billion (around Rs 25,000 crore), had faced a brief disruption after hundreds of Chinese engineers returned home unexpectedly. However, Foxconn has since filled the gap with experts from Taiwan and other locations.

Sources revealed that Apple plans to ramp up production in India to 60 million iPhones this year, up from 35–40 million units in 2024–25. In the financial year ending March 2025, Apple assembled 60 per cent more iPhones in India, valued at USD 22 billion.

The Bengaluru unit had faced a brief disruption after hundreds of Chinese engineers returned home unexpectedly
PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Apple CEO Tim Cook announced that a majority of iPhones sold in the US in June 2025 were made in India.

In Q2, Apple's iPhone shipments in India rose 19.7 per cent year-on-year, capturing a 7.5 per cent share of the domestic smartphone market. iPhone 16 was the top-shipped model.

India's smartphone market in the June quarter was led by Vivo with a 19 per cent share, according to IDC. —*PTI*

100-day cultural event begis in Chikkaballapur

MUDDENAHALLI, 17 AUG

A 100-day cultural festival themed "One World One Family" was inaugurated at Sathya Sai Grama, Muddenahalli, Chikkaballapur, uniting artists from 100 countries.

Organised by the Sri Sathya Sai Mission in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), the festival celebrates global unity through culture, spirituality, and service.

Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, via video message, announced a special IGNCA-supported cultural exhibition.

In his keynote, Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai called culture "connection, concern, collaboration, coexistence, and cocreation."

IGNCA Regional Director Mahendra D, Padma Bhushan Subramanian Ramadorai, and MLA TB Jayachandra had also addressed the gathering. —*Salar News*

Swollen river inundates farmlands in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 17 AUG

PHOTO: ANI

Continuous heavy rains in north Karnataka for over a month have wreaked havoc across the region, damaging infrastructure and flooding farmlands. In a major incident, the safety wall of a bridge across the Malaprabha river was breached near Bevinhal village in Hungund taluk, Bagalkot, on Saturday night.

The Malaprabha river, swollen by heavy inflow from the rain-battered Belagavi district, overflowed and inundated hundreds of acres of farmland, causing significant agricultural damage.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Bengaluru has forecast more heavy rainfall until August 20, particularly in coastal and Malnad districts, as well as parts of northern and southern Karnataka.

A yellow alert has been issued for the northern and southern interior regions, while orange and red alerts are in place for coastal and Malnad areas. The IMD has issued an orange alert for Uttara Kannada, Dakshina Kannada, and Udupi districts on the coast, and Chikkamagaluru, Kodagu, and Shivamogga in the Malnad region, all of which have witnessed persistent and intense rainfall since the onset of the monsoon.

In response, district administrations in Uttara Kannada, Shivamogga, and Chikkamagaluru have issued high alerts, urging residents to stay indoors and away from rivers and water bodies.

The Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority has forecast widespread rainfall with strong winds across the state over the next week, with particularly intense rain expected along the coast on 18 and 19 August. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Foreign Secretary Misri calls on Nepal PM Oli

KATHMANDU, 17 AUG

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli in Kathmandu on Sunday during his two-day visit to the Himalayan nation. The meeting took place at the Prime Minister's Office in Singhdurbar, with Indian Ambassador Naveen Srivastava also in attendance. Invited by his Nepalese counterpart Amrit Bahadur Rai, Misri will also call on President Ramchandra Paudel, meet Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba, and hold bilateral talks with Rai. He is scheduled to engage with senior political leaders including Sher Bahadur Deuba and Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'. According to officials, the visit reaffirms India's Neighbourhood First policy and is expected to lay groundwork for Oli's trip to New Delhi. —*PTI*

Extra-regional forces foray into Andamans

PORT BLAIR, 17 AUG

Lt General Dinesh Singh Rana, Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Command (CINCAN), has cautioned against the growing presence of "extra-regional forces" in the islands, stressing the need for round-the-clock surveillance to counter conventional and non-conventional threats, including terrorism. He said the Command is moving from an outpost to a strategic hub, with close monitoring of military and research vessels operating near the 90-degree and 85-degree ridges. These areas, rich in polymetallic nodules and hosting vital undersea cables, are also suitable for submarines and surveillance systems. Rana underlined the archipelago's role in dominating the Malacca Strait and Six-Degree Channel. —*PTI*

Ramadoss to continue as PMK founder-prez

VILLUPURAM, 17 AUG

Amid a leadership tussle, the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) on Sunday resolved that its founder, S Ramadoss, will continue as founder-president of the party. The decision followed months of discord between Dr Ramadoss and his son, Dr Anbumani, with both appointing and dismissing functionaries, leaving senior leaders divided. The father and son are reportedly not on speaking terms. At a special general council meeting chaired by Dr Ramadoss, Pennagaram MLA and former president GK Mani moved a resolution reaffirming his leadership. The motion was passed unanimously, with members clapping, cheering and chanting "Maruthuvar Ayya" in support Ramadoss. —*PTI*

PM Modi enquires on plans for his capacity building

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi set the agenda and ambitious targets for the Centre's civil services capacity-building programme, even asking whether a training plan had been created for him, former Capacity Building Commission (CBC) chief Adil Zainulbhai has revealed. Zainulbhai, who completed a four-year tenure as CBC chairman, said Mission Karmayogi, launched in 2021, focuses on building the skills, attitudes and knowledge of civil servants to make them citizen-centric and technology-driven. He noted that the iGOT digital platform now offers over 3,200 courses with more than 1.25 crore officials onboard. Every new law and scheme will have training modules, he added, with 20 lakh civil servants expected to complete the course. —*PTI*

EC's claim of treating BJP, Oppn laughable: Cong

ECI acting like an agent of Modi government, says Kharge

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Congress on Sunday termed the Election Commission of India's (ECI) claim of making "no distinction" between the ruling party and the opposition "laughable."

Congress party leader Jairam Ramesh accused the poll body of being "thoroughly exposed" for its "incompetence" and "blatant partisanship."

"….. the CEC and his two ECs began by saying they make no distinction between the ruling party and the opposition. This is laughable…," Jairam posted on X.

The Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and two election commissioners dismissed the opposition's claims of a "vote theft" conspiracy.

For the EC, there is no ruling side or opposition side; all are equal, Kumar claimed and said that it was on the demand of political parties that the Special Intensive Revision (SIR)was conducted.

Congress President Mallikarju Kharge said the Modi government posed a threat to India's Constitution and the right to franchise *PHOTO: PTI*

The Congress leader however, refuted his claims.

Ramesh alleged that the EC was shifting responsibility by placing the onus of voter list correction on political parties and individuals. Its real test lied in whether it complies with the Supreme Court's directives.

The press briefing came three days after the Supreme Court had rejected ECI's arguments to prevent the publication of the 65 lakh deleted voters during the Bihar SIR

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday charged the ECI with acting like an "agent" of the "dangerous" Narendra Modi government at the Centre, which posed a "threat" to the Constitution and the people's right to vote.

The Modi government decided to have a Union minister in the selection committee for ECI, ignoring the SC's advice that the Chief Justice of India could be included.Union Minister Suresh Gopi said there is no need for him to answer to the voters' list manipulation charges as ECI would give them a reply. The Opposition had charged him-with manipulating the voter's list. —*PTI/ Agencies*

FOR EASE OF LIVING & BIZ

Bill decriminalising minor offences to be tabled in LS

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The Jan Vishwas (Amendment) Bill 2025 to decriminalise certain minor offences to promote ease of living and business will be introduced by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

The minister will introduce the Bill to amend certain enactments for decriminalising and rationalising offences to further enhance trust-based governance for ease of living and doing business.

Over 350 provisions are proposed to be amended through this bill.

The legislation is part of the government's effort to improve the business climate of the country.

Piyush Goyal *PHOTO: PTI*

Earlier in 2023, the Jan Vishwas (Amendment to Provisions) Act was enacted, which decriminalised 183 provisions in 42 central Acts administered by 19 ministries and departments.

Through the Act, the government removed imprisonment and/or fines in some provisions. Imprisonment was removed and fine was retained in a few rules, while in some cases imprisonment and fine were converted to a penalty.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier said that there existed laws that provide for imprisonment over trivial matters, and no one ever paid attention to them.

"I have taken it upon myself to ensure that such unnecessary laws, which place Indian citizens behind bars, are abolished," the Prime Minister said. —*PTI*

Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi; Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin *PHOTO: PTI*

TN Guv doing 'cheap politics' than Oppn: CM

DHARMAPURI, 17 AUG

Chief Minister MK Stalin on Sunday mounted a scathing attack on Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi, accusing him of doing "cheap politics" than the opposition and charged him with spreading canards against the ruling DMK and the party-led government.

Listing out the various pro-people welfare initiatives of his government, he said Tamil Nadu has become a pioneer for the country in such schemes.

"Some mischief mongers are unable to stand this and are making baseless allegations," he said.

Speaking at a government event to mark the launch of social welfare initiatives, Stalin said he was not concerned about what the opposition parties say, since "that is their politics."

"There is someone doing cheaper politics than them, you know who it is. It is Governor RN Ravi, appointed by the Union BJP government. You know what he does from the Raj Bhavan--spread canards against the DMK government, against DMK. He will insult Dravidam, won't approve legislations (bills), will disrespect Tamil Thaai Vazhthu (Tamil anthem) and maligns TN students," the CM said.

He charged Ravi with making unfounded allegations about TN education, law and order and women's safety, and "creating panic".

The CM's sharp retort comes days after Ravi expressed concern over women's safety, drug abuse among youth in the state, among other issues, in his Independence Day address. —*PTI*

Sena (UBT), MNS to join hands

MUMBAI, 17 AUG

The Shiv Sena (UBT) and the MNS will "most certainly" form an alliance for the upcoming local body polls in Maharashtra, but the final call on it is likely to take place very close to the elections, leaders from both the parties have said.

While Shiv Sena (UBT) Chief Uddhav Thackeray has been more vocal about the possible alliance, his cousin and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) President Raj Thackeray is reticent.

On Friday, Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said his party will form an alliance with the MNS for the civic polls in Mumbai, Thane, Kalyan-Dombivali, Nashik and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, but there has been no word from the MNS on it yet.

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray; Maharashtra Navnirmal Sena president Raj Thacheray *PHOTO: ANI*

Echoing a similar sentiment, a Sena (UBT) leader claimed, "There will be an alliance. But the announcement will come only when the election approaches. This will also help fend off pressure tactics from the BJP."

Announcing the alliance so soon will mean added pressure of seat-sharing talks. This will rattle the party workers from both sides who are in the race to bag party tickets from their wards, the leaders claimed.

Questions are being raised in political circles on whether both the sides have started trusting each other due to their past experiences. —*PTI*

J'khand BJP probes 'conspiracy' behind Hansda's encounter

GODDA, 17 AUG

A seven-member probe team from the Jharkhand BJP, led by former Chief Minister Arjun Munda, has raised suspicions of a "major conspiracy" regarding the police encounter death of Surya Narayan Hansda. Visiting Hansda's family in Godda, Munda demanded an investigation by a committee headed by a retired High Court judge. "Police attempted to deceive the court… Hansda was arrested without a warrant," he claimed, asserting that several cases against him were fictitious.

The BJP insisted on a fresh post-mortem by an expert team is necessary. —*PTI*

Modi urges states to help implement GST

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the Centre has circulated the draft of the next-generation GST reforms among states and sought their cooperation to implement the proposal before Diwali.

He said the reform in GST would benefit poor and middle-class people, as well as small and big businesses.

Addressing an event after the inauguration of two expressways, the Prime Minister said the Centre intends to make the GST law simpler and revise tax rates.

Modi said the Centre has sent the draft proposal of the GST reform to the states.

The objective of this reform is to make GST simpler and revise rates, he added.

Additionally, Modi on Sunday inaugurated the Delhi section of the Dwarka Expressway and Urban Extension Road-II worth nearly Rs 11,000 crore to reduce traffic congestion in the national capital and its surrounding areas.

These new projects are expected to significantly reduce travel time from Sonipat, Rohtak, Bahadurgarh and Gurugram to IGI Airport when completely operational. —*PTI*

Ex-CJI Khanna to ONOE committee: Constitutional validity not desirability

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Former Chief Justice of India Sanjeev Khanna has presented his views to a parliamentary committee reviewing the simultaneous election bill, asserting that while the bill's constitutional validity stands, it does not imply that its provisions are desirable or necessary. Khanna cautioned that the proposal could raise concerns about the dilution of the country's federal structure.

In his written opinion, he noted, "This clause will be open to question as violating and offending the basic structure of the Constitution on the ground of being arbitrary and offending Article 14." He warned that postponing elections by the Election Commission could lead to "indirect President's rule," undermining the constitutional framework.

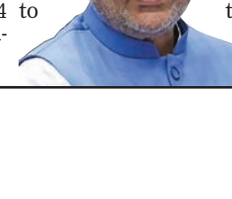
Khanna emphasised that past instances of simultaneous elections in 1951-52, 1957, 1962, and 1967 were coincidental and not a constitutional mandate. He distinguished between merit and judicial review. —*PTI*

SC TAKES SUO MOTU ON PLIGHT OF DISABLED CADETS

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The Supreme Court has initiated suo motu proceedings regarding the challenges encountered by cadets medically discharged from military training institutes due to disabilities sustained during their programmes. A bench comprising Justices BV Nagarathna and R Mahadevan will address the issue on Monday, following a media report that brought attention to these cadets, previously enrolled at esteemed establishments like the National Defence Academy (NDA) and Indian Military Academy (IMA).

The report indicates that approximately 500 officer cadets have been discharged medically from these institutes since 1985, incurring substantial medical expenses with insufficient ex-gratia payments. At the NDA alone, around 20 cadets were discharged between 2021 and July 2025.



Crucially, these cadets are not classified as ex-servicemen (ESM) due to their disabilities occurring prior to commissioning, depriving them of benefits such as the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS). Currently, they receive ex-gratia payments of up to Rs 40,000 per month, an amount that inadequately meets their basic living needs. —*PTI*

EMPOWERMENT DRIVE

12L Andhra women use free bus rides

AMRAVATI, 17 AUG

Over 12 lakh women used the free bus travel facility in Andhra Pradesh within the first 30 hours of the launch of 'Stree Shakti' scheme.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu launched 'Stree Shakti' (women's power) on August 15 at Pandit Nehru Bus Station in Vijayawada. The scheme offers free travel on select bus services to all girls, women and transgender persons holding Andhra Pradesh domicile status.

"In the past 30 hours, over 12 lakh women travelled free of cost in APSRTC buses," an official said.

The beneficiaries have saved up to Rs 5 crore on the first day of 'Stree Shakti' implementation.

The scheme will cost Rs 1,942 crore annually and Rs 162 crore per month, with the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) set to recover the amount by submitting the issued zero-fare tickets to the state government for reimbursement.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu felicitates a beneficiary of Stree Shakti scheme, while a ticket collector looks on *PHOTO: PTI*

- This beneficiaries can travel across the state in the five categories of Pallevelugu, Ultra Pallevelugu, City Ordinary, Metro Express and Express services of APSRTC.

This beneficiaries can travel across the state in the five categories of Pallevelugu, Ultra Pallevelugu, City Ordinary, Metro Express and Express services of APSRTC. On the requests of women the government have extended the free bus services on ghat routes as well.

Around 76,000 beneficiaries availed the free bus service on the first day and around five lakh by 3 pm on 16 August.

Starting 18 August a large number of women employees are expected to avail the service.

In addition to Aadhar cards, the government is expected to accept other identity documents which establish local domicile status of the beneficiaries.

The APSRTC officials are likely to accept photocy of Aadhar cards.

Ration card and driving license are also accepted by drivers of these buses.

The zero-fare tickets issued are updated in real time on the road transport corporation's system as the transporter's ticketing system is a web-based one. —*PTI*

NDA's VP nominee is a long-time RSS sanghi

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Maharashtra Governor Chandrapuram Ponnusamy Radhakrishnan has been named the BJP and NDA's candidate for the post of Vice President.

A long-time RSS volunteer and former MP from Tamil Nadu, Radhakrishnan, 67, began his political journey as an RSS swayamsevak at 16 and joined the Bharatiya Jan Sangh in 1974. Born on 20 October, 1957, in Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu, he holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

He served as a BJP MP from Coimbatore in 1998 and 1999 but lost three subsequent elections. Nevertheless, he remains a respected figure across party lines in Tamil Nadu. Supporters often refer to him as the "Modi of Tamil Nadu".

Radhakrishnan was BJP's Tamil Nadu secretary in 1996 and state president from 2004 to 2007. During his tenure, he led a 93-day, 19,000 km 'Ratha Yatra' to promote causes such as interlinking rivers, a uniform civil code, eradicating terrorism, ending untouchability, and fighting narcotics.

From 2020 to 2022, he was BJP's all-India in-charge for Kerala. Known for his organisational skills, he played a key role in forging a new alliance for the BJP in Tamil Nadu in 2004 after the DMK exited the NDA.

He became Governor of Jharkhand in early 2023 and later held additional charge of Telangana and Puducherry. On 31 July, 2024, he was sworn in as Maharashtra Governor.

An OBC leader, Radhakrishnan's nomination is seen as a strategic move to counter opposition narratives.

A sports enthusiast, he excelled in table tennis, long-distance running, and enjoys cricket and volleyball. He maintains close ties with Tamil Nadu politics, meeting CM MK Stalin during a visit. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X /Dmkalahandi

Kalahandi IAS aspirants to get free coaching

BHAWANIPATNA, 17 AUG

Civil services aspirants in Odisha's Kalahandi district will now benefit from free coaching under the newly launched Mission Akankhya. The initiative was formalised on Independence Day through an MoU between the Kalahandi district administration and Vision IAS, New Delhi. As part of its CSR outreach, Vision IAS will provide coaching to 60 students annually, selected through a written test and interview, while the district administration will arrange infrastructure support. Classes will be conducted in both classroom and online modes, beginning in Bhawanipatna from October. Registration opens on 22 August and the entrance test will be held on 21 September. This is Vision IAS's first such project in Odisha. *—PTI*

Delhi man kills wife, surrenders before police

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

A 24-year-old woman was found dead in a slum in northeast Delhi's Seelampur on Sunday after her husband surrendered to police and admitted to killing her, officials said. Police confirmed that the man walked into the local station and confessed, following which a team was immediately dispatched to the scene. Officers discovered the woman lying lifeless on the floor of the couple's dwelling. Forensic experts were called to examine the site, and the body was later sent to GTB Hospital for a post-mortem examination. The accused was arrested and an investigation was underway. Authorities have not yet disclosed further details about the circumstances surrounding the killing.*—PTI*

BTech students in Noida dies by suicide

NOIDA, 17 AUG

A 24-year-old BTech student at Sharda University, Greater Noida, allegedly died by suicide in his hostel room, police said on Sunday. The student, Shivam Dey from Bihar's Madhubani, was found hanging on Friday night. In a note, he blamed no one but said he could not bear study pressure and asked the university to refund his fees to his parents.Police have registered a case and sent the body for post-mortem. Shivam, the only son of his parents, had returned to campus on 2 August after a family trip. A university spokesperson said Shivam had failed to meet the 5.0 CGPA requirement in his second year. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.*—PTI*

Odisha ashram's priest held for 'raping' woman

DHENKANAL, 17 AUG

Police in Odisha have arrested the head priest of Mathakargola Ashram in Dhenkanal district for allegedly raping a 35-year-old woman inmate. The woman, in her FIR, claimed the 47-year-old priest assaulted her while she had been sleeping in a room on the ashram premises on 4 August. He also abused her when she resisted his moves. He was arrested under rape charges and produced before court on Saturday, which remanded him to 14 days in judicial custody, said Additional SP Suryamani Pradhan. The accused, while being taken to the prison, denied the allegation, claiming he had been framed by some people. Police said further investigation is was being conducted.*—PTI*

Cloudburst in Kathua causes landslides

Police tells people in hilly areas to remain indoors and not venture near water bodies

NEW DELHI, 17 AUGUST

A cloudburst in Kathua district of Jammu and Kashmir has caused severe damage, with mud houses collapsing and floodwaters submerging low-lying areas. A social media video showed survivors desperately pulling a half-buried girl from the rubble while searching for missing persons.

Landslides triggered by heavy rains also affected Changda village (under Kathua police jurisdiction) and Dilwan-Hutli in Lakhanpur police station area, though no major damage has been reported there. The intense rainfall has caused water levels in most local water bodies to rise sharply, with the Ujh river flowing near the danger mark.

Several homes and shops remain submerged, prompting the district administration to urge residents to stay away from rivers and water bodies for safety. Police have advised people, especially those in hilly areas, to remain indoors due to the high risk of flash floods. Helpline numbers 9858034100 and 112 have been provided for emergencies.

Army personnel engaged in rescue operations in Kathua **PHOTO: PTI**

Train services along the Jammu-Pathankot rail line have been disrupted due to the cloudburst, with several local trains cancelled or short-terminated.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke with Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to offer full support for relief efforts. Abdullah and Sinha expressed grief over the loss of lives, with the Chief Minister announcing ex-gratia assistance from the CM's Relief Fund.

According to the announcement, Rs 2 lakh will be provided to families of the deceased, Rs 1 lakh to severely injured individuals, and Rs 50,000 for minor injuries. Compensation for housing damage includes Rs 1 lakh for fully damaged houses, Rs 50,000 for severe damage, and Rs 25,000 for partial damage.

Omar Abdullah conveyed condolences to the bereaved families and assured all necessary aid. Union Minister Jitendra Singh confirmed that civil, military, and paramilitary forces are engaged in rescue operations. *—PTI*

Search for cloudburst victims on in Kishtwar

CHISOTI, 17 AUG

The search operation to trace those missing in the cloudburst in Chisoti village of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district entered the fourth day on Sunday with rescuers hopeful of clearing a major impact spot during the day.

Army engineers, meanwhile, have started working on a bailey bridge to restore connectivity to the village and the Machail Mata shrine.

60 persons were killed and leaving 80 others were missing in the cloudburst. 167 people were rescued.

The flash-floods triggered by the cloudburst left a trail of destruction, flattening a makeshift market, buildings and vital infrastructure in the region.

Rescue teams along with civil administration and local volunteers are continuing the rescue efforts.

So far, 50 bodies have been identified and handed over to their next of kin.

Medicine, food, and other relief material are being provided to the affected. *—PTI*

WOMAN DIED NATURALLY

Woman's crying can't mean dowry harassment: HC

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The Delhi High Court has held that mere fact that a woman was crying, cannot per se make out any case of dowry harassment.

The court made the observation while dismissing a petition against the discharge of a husband and his family from charges of cruelty and dowry harassment.

The prosecution claimed that the woman, married in December 2010, faced harassment and dowry demands from her husband and in-laws.

Her family claimed that they spent nearly Rs 4 lakh on the wedding, after which the accused demanded a motorcycle, cash, and a gold bracelet.

The woman, a mother of two daughters, died in 2014.

The deceased's sister had claimed that she had called her sister on Holi and found her crying. However, merely because the deceased was crying, cannot per se make out any case of dowry harassment, the high court said.

The trial court had discharged the accused noting that the death took place due to pneumonia, a natural cause. The autopsy also attributed the cause of death to the infection.

It also observed that the father of the woman neither mentioned specific incidents nor did he provide proof of giving money to the accused.

"Such bald assertions, in the given situation, cannot be held to be even making out a prima facie case of harassment," the court said. *—PTI*

Shukla receives hero's welcome in India

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Union Minister of Science and Technology Jitendra Singh and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman V Narayanan receive astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla returned to India early on Sunday, receiving a hero's welcome at the Indira Gandhi International Airport. The crowd, waving the national tricolour and beating drums, celebrated Shukla's historic spaceflight as part of the Axiom-4 mission.

Shukla, the second Indian to travel to the International Space Station (ISS), was accompanied by his backup astronaut, Prashanth Balakrishnan Nair, and greeted by Union Minister Jitendra Singh, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, and ISRO Chairman V Narayanan. "Thank you sir. Surely feels good to be back home," he posted on X in response to Singh's warm welcome.

His wife Kamna and son Kiash also joined in the celebrations. The government plans a special discussion in the Lok Sabha on Shukla's return and the significance of India's space programme, with a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected on Monday.

Reflecting on his journey via Instagram, Shukla expressed mixed emotions: "Having received incredible love and support... I can't wait to share my experiences with all of you."

He highlighted the bittersweet nature of goodbyes, quoting his commander Peggy Whitson: "The only constant in spaceflight is change."*—PTI*

Hindu outfit to hold kirtan near UP mausoleum; security upped

KANPUR, 17 AUG

Security has been heightened around a disputed mausoleum in Fatehpur as a Hindu organisation, the Math Mandir Sanrakshan Sangharsh Samiti, announced plans to hold a 'kirtan' (devotional singing) at the site.

Police tightened the security arrangements, with prohibitory orders in effect, that restricted residents from leaving their homes without a valid reason.

Over 300 police personnel, two platoons of the Provincial Armed Constabulary, and Special Task Force teams were deployed within a one-kilometer radius along with drone surveillance in the area.

Tensions escalated when the Math Mandir Sanrakshan Sangharsh Samiti sent a letter to the district administration, seeking permission to "clean and beautify" the mausoleum, alleging it was a temple.

The Hindu organisation had sought permission from the district admonistration to beautify the mausoleum, claiming it to be a temple **PHOTO: ANI**

Despite the administration denying permission, a mob entered the premises, hoisted saffron flags, performed Hindu rituals, and vandalised graves. The damaged portions have since been repaired.

Provocative social media messages also contributed to the unrest. The police registered three FIRs and identified 140 suspects. *—PTI*

2 dead, 117 injured in M'rashtra Dahi Handi festivities

MUMBAI/THANE/BHUJ, 17 AUG

A tragic turn of events during the Dahi Handi festival, which celebrates the birth of Lord Krishna, has left two dead and over 117 injured in Mumbai and Thane, while a 15-year-old boy lost his life in Gujarat's Kutch district due to an electric pole accident.

In Mumbai, Rohan Mohan Malvi, part of the Gaondevi Govinda Pathak, suffered a fatal collapse at Andheri and was pronounced dead on arrival at Rajawadi Hospital. Earlier, Jagmohan Shivkiran Chaudhari fell to his death while attempting to tie a 'Dahi Handi' in Mankhurd..

In Gujarat, a video showed an electric pole collapsing on a crowd during a Janmastami celebration, resulting in the death of Ishwar Varchand, 15. The tragic incidents have cast a shadow over the traditional celebrations. *—PTI*

FOREST DEPT NOT NODAL AGENCY FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT: CENTRE

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has reaffirmed that Community Forest Resource Management Plans (CFRMPs) must be prepared by Gram Sabhas through their Community Forest Resource Management Committees (CFRMCs), as per the Forest Rights Act. This clarification follows inquiries from Chhattisgarh's forest and tribal development departments.

In a letter dated 14 August, the ministry stated that the CFRMC, constituted by the Gram Sabha, is solely responsible for preparing the CFRMP, rejecting any involvement from the forest department or external agencies. This response addresses a controversial May 15 circular from Chhattisgarh's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), which claimed the forest department would manage community forest lands pending a model plan from the ministry.

"Single standardized draft plans may not be practical," the ministry noted, advising Gram Sabhas to use the operational guidelines of the Dharti Aba-Janajatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DA-JGUA) to develop localized CFRMPs. Activist Alok Shukla highlighted concerns over the circular undermining the Forest Rights Act's goal of decentralising forest governance. *—PTI*

Student found dead in BITS Pilani, Goa campus

PANAJI, 17 AUG

A 20-year-old student from the BITS Pilani campus in Goa has been found dead in his hostel room. Kushagra Jain, a third-year student of Economics and Computer Science from Uttar Pradesh, was discovered lying unresponsive on his bed in Vasco at approximately 11am on Saturday.

- The room was locked from inside. After concerns arose, college authorities broke open the door, only to find Jain dead.

A senior police official reported that the room was locked from the inside. Aftter concerns arose due to a lack of response, authorities broke open the door, only to find Jain already dead. Witnesses noted that he had played table tennis the previous night.

The body has been sent for a post-mortem examination to determine the cause of death, and a case of unnatural death has been registered at Verna police station. BITS Pilani expressed deep sorrow over the loss, stating, the entire collage grieved for the loss.*—PTI*

BEING TECH SAVY

Digital revolution: Centenarian in Kerala masters smartphones

T'PURAM, 17 AUG

PHOTO: AI

MA Abdullah Moulavi from Asamannoor in Ernakulam district is incredibly self-reliant in choosing his favourite social media reels and watching important news on YouTube.

While searching prayer songs swiftly on his son's smartphone with his fragile fingers and pressing the video call button to talk to his grandchild abroad, Moulavi's wrinkled face beams with pride and happiness.

The 104-year-old is one of about 22 lakh persons in Kerala, who have become digitally literate through the path-breaking "Digi Keralam" programme rolled out by the state government.

Sarasu, 79, a daily wage earner, became a YouTube channel owner and Sulochana, 80 in Moovattupuzha accessed government services on her mobile without anyone's help.

"Digital learning has brought such a positive change in his daily life at this age," Abdullah's son Faizal said.

99.98 per cent of learners, among who 1,500 are over 90 years, achieved basic digital skills and passed out.

Launched on 22 September, 2022 by the Local Self-Government Department (LSGD), the programme identified 21,87,677 digitally illiterate people and trained them in different tasks. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will declare the state as totally digitally literate on 21 August. LSGD Minister M B Rajesh said the digital literacy was needed when government services had become online. *—PTI*

One-sided lover's parcel bomb plot foiled

KHAIRAGARH, 17 AUG

An electrician from Chhattisgarh has been arrested for allegedly planting an improvised explosive device (IED) inside a music speaker and sending it as a gift to the husband of a woman he was infatuated with.

The suspect, Vinay Verma, 20, learnt to assemble the device through online tutorials.

His search history included "how to kill a person using a bomb without being caught by police".

The parcel, disguised with a fake India Post logo, was delivered to Afsar Khan's shop in Manpur village. Suspicious, Khan alerted authorities, and a bomb squad discovered a 2kg IED designed to explode once plugged in. *—PTI*

Teen sexually assaults, kills minor in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD, 17 AUG

- CCTV footage showed the boy being taken away by the suspect, who was arrested on 15 August. The child's body was later found in bushes near his residence.

A teenager has been arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting and murdering a five-year-old boy in Uppal, police said on Sunday.

On 12 August, the accused, employed at a timber depot, lured the child by offering to buy him biscuits and took him to a secluded spot near his home. He allegedly assaulted and strangled the boy to death, fearing the child might reveal the incident.

When the boy did not return home, his father lodged a missing complaint. CCTV footage showed him being taken away by the suspect, who was arrested on 15 August. The child's body was later found in bushes near his residence.

The accused, being a minor, was sent for an age determination test. A case under the POCSO Act and BNS has been registered. *—PTI*

MAKING HISTORY ON MOUNTAINS

28-year-old Anissa Lamare, hailing from Shillong, is redefining what it means to go off the beaten track by being India's first female downhill mountain bicyclist, a title earned through years of grit, resilience and unwavering passion. Lamare began her journey in December 2015. She participated in her first competition in India with no separate women's category, racing against male riders. Downhill mountain biking involves racing down steep, rugged trails at high speed, demands strength, technical skill and mental endurance

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Adityanath govt's 'school pairing' policy sparks row

The "school pairing" policy seeks to merge more than 10,000 primary and upper primary schools with fewer than 50 students into nearby institutions, usually within the one-kilometre radius ***PHOTO: PTI***

What began as an administrative exercise to merge under-enrolled schools in Uttar Pradesh has snowballed into a veritable political flashpoint, sparking protests, poster wars, FIRs and heated exchanges in the state's Assembly.

The "school pairing" policy announced in June by the Adityanath government, seeks to merge more than 10,000 primary and upper primary schools with fewer than 50 students into nearby institutions, usually within the one-kilometre radius.

Officials say the move will strengthen infrastructure, ensure adequate teacher strength and provide larger peer groups for students, but the Opposition brands it "a disguised closure" of government schools that will push marginalised and rural children out of the education system.

Over the past six weeks, the issue has refused to fade, surviving courtroom scrutiny, a government clarification blitz, multiple street protests, FIRs against political workers and poster wars.

The issue flagged by opposition in the recently concluded session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly also led to heated discussions, with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stoutly defending the decision.

The policy followed a sharp decline in government school enrolments after the COVID pandemic. In 2022-23, enrolments stood at 1.92 crore, but have since dropped to just more than one crore in the current academic session.

Additional Chief Secretary (Basic Education) Deepak Kumar said the move follows models in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat and is in line with the National Education Policy 2020. The policy also faced legal challenges but the Allahabad High Court dismissed the pleas, ruling that the Act allows flexibility and has no evidence of rights violations. While the government won in court, it continues to battle political barbs.

Opposition campaign against the move spearheaded by Samajwadi Party (SP) Chief Akhilesh Yadav has found support from nearly all opposition, including Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

Yadav has branded the move a "deep-rooted conspiracy" to deprive Backward classes, Dalits, and minorities (PDA) of education and, by extension, their political voice.

In rural areas, SP workers have launched "PDA Pathshalas" -- informal teaching centres for children whose schools have been merged. Some of these centres featured "politicised alphabets" such as "A for Akhilesh" and "M for Mulayam Singh Yadav," prompting the government to accuse the party of misusing children for propaganda. FIRs have been filed against SP leaders in Saharanpur, Varanasi, Mau, Prayagraj, and Lucknow for running these "unauthorised" classes.

The SP calls this harassment, while the government insists it is necessary to protect children's education from politicisation. The AAP too has joined the fray, with Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh launching a "school bachao" campaign under the slogan "Madhushala nahi, pathshala chahiye (Not liquor shops, we want schools)."

The BJP countered the allegations by putting up posters in Lucknow on the first day of the Assembly session, targeting SP's "PDA Pathshala" campaign. Sponsored by BJP MLC and state General Secretary Subhash Yaduvansh, the posters claimed to expose the "dark truth" of the initiative, alleging that SP's PDA Pathshalas were teaching "A for Akhilesh and D for Dimple."

Under growing pressure, the state's Basic Education Minister Sandeep Singh and other BJP leaders rolled out pressers and clarifications, insisting that no school is being permanently shut and that mergers only apply to institutions with less than 50 students.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also waded into the debate in the Assembly, dismissing the "closure" charge and framing the policy as part of a broader education modernisation drive.

The CM further announced the rollout of LKG, UKG, and nursery classes in government schools, alongside a Rs 100 crore nutrition mission for malnourished children.

Leader of Opposition Mata Prasad Pandey alleged that 29,000 schools had been merged and 10,000 closed, claiming this was a deliberate attempt to deprive the poor of education.

SP MLAs also linked the issue to broader accusations that the BJP is neglecting job creation and rural development, with Adityanath countering it by accusing the SP of running a "copying mafia" during its tenure and ignoring infrastructure needs.

Mixed reactions are seen in villages with some parents seeing the potential benefits of better facilities and larger peer groups while others worry about safety and drop-out risks when children have to travel two or three kilometres to school.

Teachers, especially in villages, warn that the distance will weaken their ability to encourage attendance through personal outreach. "Once schools are far away, that connection is lost," a teacher from teacher told PTI, saying that he fears that many children will simply drop out.

Education access remains a politically potent theme, particularly among rural and marginalised voters. With panchayat and Assembly elections still ahead, Opposition appears determined to keep the issue simmering.

The government plans to complete the pairing process within weeks and whether that will quiet the political noise, however, remains uncertain. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

One man's solar dream lit up Manipur's remote areas

On the small islands in the Loktak lake, home to thousands of fisherfolk, the arrival of solar energy has been a blessing ***PHOTO: ANI***

As the sun dips behind the remote hills of Manipur, life in many villages once slipped into darkness. Women finished their chores early, children struggled to study under kerosene lamps, and health workers relied on noisy diesel generators to attend to emergencies.

But in recent years, the quiet glow of solar lamps has begun to change that story. At the centre of this transformation is Seth Moirangthem, a 38-year-old from Imphal East district.

His startup, SNL Energy Solutions Ltd, has brought clean, affordable electricity to thousands of households scattered across the state's remote hilly areas and to the fishing communities living on the islands in the Loktak lake in Bishnupur district.

"Back in 2015, while travelling to Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Senapati, I realised how people struggled without access to power," Seth recalled.

"That was also when I met people associated with the Selco Foundation in Bengaluru, and the idea of solar energy solutions struck me," he told PTI.

Seth, an Arts graduate from Manipur University, said he was provided technical training by the Selco Foundation.

The challenges, he admitted, have been daunting. Solar equipment is purchased in Guwahati and trucked in through Manipur's highways.

"Periodic blockades, bandhs and now the ethnic violence often disrupt supplies. Installation takes only a few hours, but getting the material there can take days," he said.

Still, by relying on local partners, Seth and his team have managed to continue lighting up homes in places few power lines reach.

For residents, the change has been dramatic. Luithui, a villager in Ukhrul, said solar energy has given women fresh opportunities. "They can run sewing machines and power looms late into the evening. Children, too, study without straining their eyes."

Health workers echo the sentiment. At Jessami Primary Health Centre in Ukhrul, near the Nagaland border, health worker K Makweiron said life without solar back-up was tough.

"Earlier, we used diesel generators. They were expensive and deafening. With solar panels, we finally have a reliable, quiet solution to serve patients," she said.

On the small islands in the Loktak lake, home to thousands of fisherfolk, the arrival of solar energy has been a blessing.

"Candles and kerosene lamps were dangerous for our thatched huts," said fisherman P Keshojit Meitei. "Now our homes are safe, and the nights feel alive."

Beyond lighting homes, SNL Energy Solutions -- named after the biblical phrase 'Salt and Light' -- has provided street lamps in the remote hilly areas of Tamenglong and Churachandpur districts.

To make the technology affordable, Seth has tied up with NGOs and microfinance institutions, offering families the option of paying in small monthly instalments.

"A 40-watt panel is enough for a few bulbs. For power looms and sewing machines, a 1-kilowatt panel is better. Since those cost more, we spread out payments through EMIs," he said.

Officials of the Manipur State Power Distribution Company Limited (MSPDCL) admit that solar is bridging a crucial gap.

"Most major villages are connected to the grid, but many remote households and settlements on Loktak lake remain off-grid due to terrain and connectivity issues. In such areas, solar is a lifeline," said an MSPDCL officer.

With plans to expand into Assam and Nagaland, Seth's enterprise is growing.

From loom-filled courtyards in Ukhrul to the islands in Loktak, his solar panels are rewriting nightly routines *—PTI*

At the centre of this transformation is Seth Moirangthem, a 38-year-old from Imphal East district ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Western UP's migrants lose light, faith with unmaintained solar panels

A group of migrant workers show the solar panel they are using to meet their energy needs, in Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh ***PHOTO: PTI***

In a dusty brick kiln colony on the outskirts of Aligarh, 32-year-old migrant worker Kamal Singh stands beside a lifeless solar panel mounted on his hut.

"Yeh toh roshni ka sahara tha. Par ab pehle jaise nahi chalta. (This was our source of light. But now it doesn't work like before," he said.

Once a symbol of self-reliance that lit up his hut and powered a fan through scorching summers, the panel is now coated in grime, barely functioning -- a casualty of lack of maintenance, guidance and rising air pollution.

As India expands its renewable energy footprint, stories like Kamal have revealed a troubling gap between solar adoption and solar maintenance.

Many migrant workers across the dusty interiors of western Uttar Pradesh -- Hathras, Bulandshahr, Aligarh -- embraced solar as a lifeline to meet their energy needs but are now finding themselves disillusioned.

Some even pooled money to install small solar panels on their huts using their savings from months of labour under the sun and for a while, it even worked: two bulbs lit up their rooms, a fan offered respite from the heat, and mobile phones stayed charged.

But today, the lights flicker weakly and the fan barely moves.

"We don't know what went wrong. When we took it to the shop, they said dust had accumulated on it. Then we cleaned it properly with a cloth, but it's still not working like before," said Kamal's wife, Rashmi.

Neeraj Jain, director at Solar Square, an Indian company focused on residential solar energy solutions, pointed out that cleaning must be done gently and correctly.

"Leaning or scrubbing too hard can cause micro-cracks or damage the anti-reflective coating, which significantly reduces the panel's lifespan," he cautioned.

But this knowledge hasn't reached the brick kiln workers of western Uttar Pradesh, who often rely on second-hand information or trial-and-error methods.

With little formal training and no local technicians to guide them, families clean panels with the same cloth and phenyl solution they use to mop floors or dust it the way they do dusting at home.

Some lean directly on the glass surface while scrubbing, unaware they may be damaging the very panels they depend on for electricity. In these informal settlements, where electricity theft, outages, and diesel costs once made solar seem like a breakthrough, the lack of aftercare and support has quickly turned innovation into frustration.

"I saved Rs 3,000 on electricity last year. But now, the panel stopped working properly. No one ever told us how to take care of it," said Kishore Kumar, a migrant construction worker in Nanau village.

Others tell similar stories.

"We bought it thinking it would help during nights as we were either dependent on oil lamps or pilfering electricity, but it became more headache than help," said Sangeeta, who migrated from Bihar's Gaya to work in a brick kiln in Nanau village of Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh district.

Experts agree that while solar systems are marketed as low-maintenance, they are not maintenance-free.

"Within 90 days, performance drops by up to 35 per cent if not cleaned," said Jain.

"In rural, off-grid areas, the panels often face poor air quality, dust, bird droppings, and no guidance on upkeep. After a year or two, many just abandon them," he added.

Shopkeepers in surrounding areas like Pilakhana and Bijauli also report declining use.

The problem isn't the technology but the lack of education and support.

Like Jain said that solar panels do not need complicated maintenance.

When PTI reached out to the shops selling solar panels, the shopkeepers said that they themselves are not sure how to ensure effective maintenance and just tell the people to wipe it properly with wet and dry cloth.

Air pollution is further making the situation worse.

Researchers at IIT Delhi's Centre for Atmospheric Sciences (2001-2018) found that particulate pollution reduces direct sunlight radiation (called atmospheric attenuation) and causes soiling. As a result, solar panel efficiency in India declines by approximately 12 per cent for fixed panels and up to 41 per cent for dual-axis tracking systems. In the eastern and northern power grids, reductions in received sunlight range from 12-16 per cent.

For families relying on solar for basic needs -- charging a phone, running a light or fan -- such a drop makes a system nearly unusable.

Indrajit Singh, Managing Director of the Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA), acknowledged the issue.

"We've focused on expanding solar access, but now we are scaling up training and 30,000 Surya Mitras are being trained in UP for installation and maintenance," he said.

So far, over 5,000 individuals have been trained and 3,000 vendors registered, according to Singh. But such programs are yet to reach the migrant belts of western UP in any meaningful way.

India is home to over 450 million internal migrants, according to the 2011 Census, with current estimates by independent researchers suggesting the number could now exceed 600 million, as many move in search of work, education, or better living conditions.

Among them, Uttar Pradesh is both a major sending and receiving state, with millions of migrant workers moving seasonally between states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

For these workers, access to reliable and affordable energy is not a luxury -- it is essential for their empowerment, said Nirmal Gorana, convenor of the National Campaign Committee for the Eradication of Bonded Labour, who has extensively documented labour conditions in kilns.

But without basic maintenance support, even this modest progress begins to unravel.

"We turned to solar with hope and invested our hard-earned savings in it.

To buy this panel, we made sacrifices' whether it meant cutting back on better food, medicine, or even sending money home. So when the panel stops working, it isn't just a financial loss' it shatters our trust in the system," said Kamal. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

7 killed in gun attack on picnic-goers in Pak

PESHAWAR, 17 AUG

Seven people were killed and one injured when unidentified gunmen ambushed a group of friends returning from a picnic in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, police said on Sunday. The attack occurred late Saturday in Regi Shino Khel, a suburban area of Kohat district, about 65km southwest of Peshawar. The victims were returning from Tanda Dam to their village, Khara Ghari Muhammad Zai, when the gunmen opened fire. Rescue 1122 and police shifted the victims to District Headquarters Hospital, Kohat. The injured was later referred to a Peshawar hospital. Police have launched a search operation and registered a case to determine the motive. *—PTI*

Pak to not stop mountaineering amid rising deaths

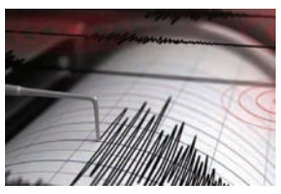
PESHAWAR, 17 AUG

Pakistan will not impose restrictions on mountaineering expeditions in the north, despite recent climber deaths, said Faizullah Faraq, spokesman for the Gilgit-Baltistan government. Climbers understand the extreme risks, including harsh weather, but still attempt the summits. Chinese climber Guan Jing, 37, died last Tuesday on K2 after being hit by falling rocks; her body was recovered Saturday. German Olympian Laura Dahlmeier also died recently on Laila Peak. Faraq noted efforts to improve infrastructure, rescue, and safety, as expeditions generate vital income. Accidents remain common due to avalanches and sudden weather shifts, worsened this year by monsoon-triggered floods and landslides. *—PTI*

Bolsonaro leaves house arrest for medical exams

SÃO PAULO, 16 AUG

Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro briefly left house arrest Saturday for medical exams in Brasília, following court authorisation. Doctors at DF Star hospital reported he showed signs of two recent lung infections, esophagitis, gastritis, fever, cough, reflux, and hiccups. He was discharged the same day and will continue treatment with medication. Bolsonaro, stabbed during his 2018 campaign, has had multiple hospital stays, most recently for bowel surgery in April. Now under house arrest since Aug 5, he's on trial for allegedly trying to overturn the 2022 election. Supporters gathered outside the hospital, echoing Donald Trump's claims of political persecution. *—PTI*



5.8 quake rocks Indonesia's Sulawesi island

PALU, 17 AUG

A 5.8-magnitude undersea earthquake struck near Poso district in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, on Sunday, injuring 29 people, including two critically, according to the US Geological Survey. The quake, followed by at least 15 aftershocks, caused structural damage to a church where most victims were attending Sunday service, officials said. No tsunami warning was issued. Authorities are conducting rapid assessments of the damage. Indonesia, located on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," is prone to frequent earthquakes and tsunamis. Notably, a 5.6 quake in 2022 killed 602 in West Java, and over 4,300 died in Sulawesi's 2018 tsunami. *—PTI*

Putin seeks key land for truce with Ukraine

In return for Donetsk, Putin offers to freeze frontline in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia

LONDON, 17 AUG

Russian President Vladimir Putin has demanded full Ukrainian withdrawal from Donetsk and Luhansk as a condition for ending the war, sources told The Guardian following talks with Donald Trump at the Alaska summit. In return, Putin offered to freeze the frontline in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, where Russian forces already hold significant territory.

While Luhansk is largely under Russian control, Ukraine still holds key areas in Donetsk, including Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, excluded from the summit, reiterated his firm opposition to any territorial concessions—illegal under Ukraine's constitution.

Trump, pushing for a land-for-ceasefire deal, told Fox News the idea was "largely agreed on" during the summit, despite no formal agreement being reached. While he called the talks "progress," European allies reaffirmed that Ukraine's borders must not be redrawn by force.

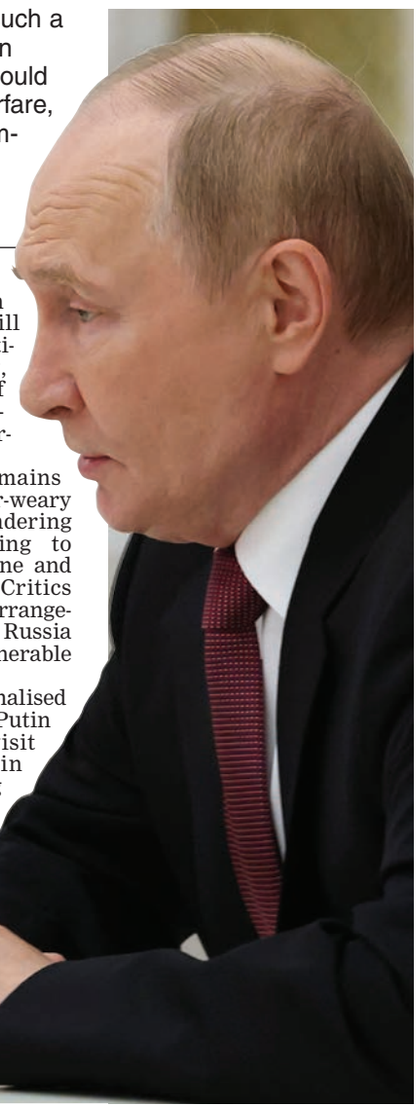
Critics warn that such a deal would weaken Ukraine and Europe long-term. Russia would likely continue hybrid warfare, disinformation campaigns, and sabotage across Europe while facing no real consequences for past violations, such as the annexation of Crimea in 2014.

A ceasefire tied to territorial concessions risks fracturing Ukrainian society, stalling reconstruction efforts, and deterring investment. Ukraine's $524 billion post-war rebuild will depend heavily on political stability, security, and public unity—all of which would be threatened by any deal perceived as a betrayal.

- Critics warn that such a deal would weaken Ukraine. Russia would likely continue warfare, disinformation campaigns, and sabotage across Europe.

Moscow's aim remains clear: to pressure a war-weary Ukraine into surrendering land, while continuing to destabilise both Ukraine and its Western allies. Critics argue that any such arrangement would embolden Russia and leave Ukraine vulnerable to future aggression.

With no agreement finalised in Alaska, Trump and Putin are expected to revisit talks, possibly in Moscow, raising renewed concerns about the future of the war and Ukraine's sovereignty. *—PTI*



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer participated in a video call on Sunday with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, as part of the 'Coalition of the Willing' PHOTO: X

European leaders to join Zelenskyy for meet with Trump

LONDON, 17 AUG

European leaders will accompany Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at his crucial meeting with US President Donald Trump on Monday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced Sunday. This joint presence aims to prevent a repeat of the tense encounter Zelenskyy experienced during his February meeting with Trump and to demonstrate strong European support for Ukraine.

Von der Leyen posted on X that she would join the meeting "at the request of President Zelenskyy," alongside other European leaders, signalling unity amid concerns Kyiv and European capitals have about Zelenskyy being pressured into a peace deal that Trump hopes to broker with Russia.

Ahead of the White House talks, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer participated in a video call on Sunday with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, as part of the "Coalition of the Willing." The leaders welcomed Trump's mediation efforts, calling them the closest progress toward ending Russia's war in Ukraine.

Starmer praised Trump's leadership but stressed that "peace cannot be decided without President Zelenskyy at the table." He supported strong security guarantees for Ukraine and warned sanctions on Russia would intensify until Moscow ends its aggression.

In a joint statement, the leaders affirmed Ukraine's right to self-defence, military partnerships, and emphasised that Russia must not dictate Ukraine's future with the EU or NATO. "International borders must not be changed by force," they said.

Reports suggest Russia seeks Ukrainian withdrawal from Donbas in exchange for freezing conflict elsewhere. While no ceasefire is agreed, Starmer and allies stressed readiness to back further talks with Kyiv central to any diplomacy. *—PTI*

Protesters took to the streets Saturday, rallying against what they called a 'fascist takeover of DC' PHOTO: PTI

States move to send National Guard to DC

WASHINGTON, 17 AUG

West Virginia, South Carolina and Ohio have announced the deployment of hundreds of National Guard troops to Washington, DC, following President Donald Trump's executive order to federalise local police and intensify crackdowns on crime and homelessness.

West Virginia is sending 300–400 troops, South Carolina 200, and Ohio 150 military police. The move adds to the 800 D.C. National Guard members already activated, increasing federal presence in the Democratic stronghold.

Trump, currently at his Virginia golf club following the Alaska summit with Vladimir Putin, claims the deployment is needed to restore order. However, critics argue that violent crime has dropped since his first term, and local officials dispute the necessity of more troops.

Protesters took to the streets Saturday, rallying against what they called a "fascist takeover of DC." Demonstrators marched from Dupont Circle to the White House, demanding a reversal of Trump's policing agenda. Police arrested 32 people.

City leaders have been forced to cooperate under federal law but are challenging key parts of the order. A lawsuit led the administration to reverse a decision to appoint the DEA chief as a temporary police commissioner.

Meanwhile, Trump's attorney general directed D.C. police to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement. Mayor Muriel Bowser called the situation a "test" of the city's limited self-rule and urged residents to stand united. Federal officers continue patrolling major landmarks, prompting fears about civil liberties and growing unease among locals. Activists warn the deployment sets a dangerous precedent for other US cities. *—PTI*

Protesters strike in Israel demanding ceasefire

JERUSALEM, 17 AUG

Thousands of Israeli protesters staged a nationwide strike on Sunday, demanding a ceasefire and the immediate release of hostages still held in Gaza. Organised by families of hostages and bereaved relatives, the "day of stoppage" closed businesses, blocked highways, and disrupted daily life across Israel.

Demonstrators fear further military action could kill the estimated 50 remaining hostages, only 20 of whom are believed alive. "We don't win a war over the bodies of hostages," chanted protesters in Tel Aviv, who were met with water cannons and police force. At least 32 people were arrested.

Former hostage Arbel Yehoud warned that military pressure "only kills them," while Anat Angrest, mother of a hostage, called for unity to prioritise life above politics. Though Israel's main labour union, Histadrut, did not join, many private businesses and municipalities supported the strike.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is facing internal pressure. Far-right cabinet members threaten to collapse the government if any deal allows Hamas to remain in power. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich condemned the strike as "harmful," and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir accused protesters of aiding Hamas.

Meanwhile, Israeli airstrikes hit a power plant in Yemen's Sanhan district, targeting Houthi energy infrastructure after recent attacks on Israel.

In Gaza, Israel began preparing for another major offensive. Humanitarian agency COGAT resumed allowing tents into the territory ahead of new displacement orders. Aid groups accuse Israel of "weaponising" assistance. The war has killed over 61,000 in Gaza, with two more children dying of malnutrition on Sunday. *—PTI*

Police uses water canon to disperse demonstrators blocking a road during in Jerusalem, Sunday PHOTO: PTI

Protesters block a road during a protest demanding the immediate release of hostages held by Hamas and calling for the Israeli government to reverse its decision to take over Gaza City near Jerusalem, Israel PHOTO: PTI

BOLIVIA HEADS TO POLLS AS RIGHT EYES 1ST WIN IN DECADES

LA PAZ, 17 AUG

Bolivians are voting in high-stakes presidential and congressional elections that could end over two decades of Leftist rule and usher in a Right-wing government amid a deep economic crisis.

Multimillionaire Samuel Doria Medina and ex-President Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga lead the right-wing challenge, locked in a tight race. However, around 30 per cent of voters remain undecided. The ruling MAS party, splintered by infighting, still commands rural support that is often underrepresented in polls.

With soaring inflation, fuel shortages, and a crumbling economy, opposition candidates promise reform and restored ties with the US and Israel, broken under former leftist leader Evo Morales. They've pledged to attract foreign investment into Bolivia's rich lithium and rare earth reserves.

Morales, barred from running and facing an arrest warrant, has urged supporters to spoil ballots, undermining MAS candidate Eduardo del Castillo. President Luis Arce has withdrawn from the race due to low approval.

A rightward shift could realign Bolivia's foreign policy, ending alliances with Venezuela, China, and Iran. But critics warn that proposed austerity measures risk sparking unrest, especially among Indigenous communities.

All 130 seats in the lower house and 36 in the Senate are also being contested. A presidential runoff is likely on 19 October unless a candidate wins outright. *—PTI*

AT LEAST 33 MISSING

8 dead as flash flood sweeps China camps

TAIPEI/ PESHAWAR/ SAN JUAN, 17 AUG

A flash flood struck a campsite in Urad Rear Banner, Inner Mongolia, north China, killing eight people and leaving four missing, state media reported Sunday.

The flood hit around 10pm on Saturday in this mountainous area known for popular campsites. Thirteen campers were initially reported missing; by Sunday morning, one had been rescued, and eight bodies recovered, according to Xinhua news agency. Search and rescue efforts continue for the remaining four.

Northern China has seen repeated flash floods and landslides recently, including deadly deluges in Gansu province earlier this month that left at least 10 dead and 33 missing. Heavy rains have also impacted other areas, with historic downpours recorded in Hong Kong.

The flood hit around 10pm on Saturday in this mountainous area known for popular campsites PHOTO: X

Pak warns of more heavy rains

Pakistan's weather department warned of heavier rains nationwide, as flash floods in northern regions have killed 327 people. Since the monsoon began in June, nearly 650 have died. Rescue operations face challenges from damaged roads and landslides, with over 2,000 personnel deployed.

Buner district remains the worst-hit, with more than 200 deaths.

Hurricane explodes near Caribbean

Hurricane Erin rapidly intensified from a tropical storm to a Category 5 in 24 hours, just north of the Caribbean. With winds of 160 mph, Erin threatens flooding rains and landslides in northeast Caribbean islands but is forecast to remain offshore.

Scientists link its rapid strengthening to climate change. Emergency measures are underway across the region. *—PTI*

Protesters clash with cops, set fire to offices in Serbia

BELGRADE, 17 AUG

Violent clashes erupted in Serbia on Saturday as protesters set fire to ruling party offices and battled riot police in Valjevo and Belgrade, escalating months of unrest triggered by alleged corruption and state brutality.

In Valjevo, 100 km west of the capital, masked demonstrators chanting anti-government slogans torched the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) offices before clashing with police, who responded with tear gas and baton charges. Similar scenes unfolded in Belgrade, where protesters set garbage containers ablaze.

The unrest follows days of protests after footage circulated showing police severely beating a young man in Valjevo. The incident drew thousands to the streets, angered over police brutality and longstanding corruption.

Protests began in November after a deadly train station collapse killed 16 people. Initially peaceful, the student-led movement has turned violent this week. Another SNS office was destroyed in Novi Sad on Wednesday.

President Aleksandar Vucic has refused calls for early elections, accusing protesters of acting on foreign orders to "destroy Serbia." He has vowed a crackdown. *—PTI*

Serbian officers patrol in truck during protest in Belgrade, Serbia

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Aurobindo's China plant to break even at EBITDA

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Aurobindo Pharma's Chief Financial Officer, Santhanam Subramanian, announced that the company's facility in China is anticipated to break even at the earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) level by the third quarter of the current financial year. The Hyderabad-based pharmaceutical manufacturer began operations at the facility in late November 2024 and is currently ramping up production. Subramanian stated, "This facility, with an initial capacity of over 2 billion units, is expected to contribute to revenue in the coming quarters." Aurobindo has invested approximately USD 145 million in this facility, which began production and invoicing in Q4 FY25 and Q1 FY26. *—PTI*

SEBI sees surge in settlement pleas, 284 files cleared

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has reported a notable increase in settlement applications, receiving 703 in fiscal year 2024-25, compared to 434 the previous year. According to SEBI's 2024-25 annual report, 284 of these applications were settled, collecting approximately Rs 798.87 crore in settlement fees and Rs 64.84 crore in disgorgement charges. Additionally, SEBI dealt with 533 new appeals during the year, of which 422 were disposed of. Additionally Sebi is looking to review the margin framework under margin trading funding (MTF) in a bid to streamline risk management at clearing corporations. Alongside this, a review of MTF and the scrips eligible under it is also under consideration. *—PTI*

FinMin to review PSBs' Q1 results on 20 August

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The Finance Ministry will meet chiefs of public sector banks (PSBs) on Wednesday to review their first-quarter performance for FY26. The meeting, chaired by Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju on 20 August, follows record sector profits of Rs 44,218 Crore, an 11per cent year-on-year rise. State Bank of India (SBI) contributed 43 per cent of the total, posting Rs 19,160 crore profit, up 12 per cent from last year. Indian Overseas Bank reported the sharpest growth at 76per cent to Rs 1,111 crore, while Punjab & Sind Bank rose 48 per cent to Rs 269 crore. Central Bank of India, Indian Bank and Bank of Maharashtra also reported double-digit growth. *—PTI*

'Current account deficit likely to widen to 1.2%'

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

India's current account deficit is expected to nearly double in the Financial Year 2026, rising to 1.2 per cent of GDP from 0.6 per cent in FY25, Union Bank of India said in a report. "We see an upward risk to our estimate for the current account (C/A) deficit for FY26 GDP. We expect higher; almost double versus last year of widening in C/A deficit in FY26 to 1.2 per cent in GDP vis-a-vis an 0.6 per cent in FY25," the report added. The report added that the geopolitical developments, including tariff concerns and potential trade agreements between India and the US or Europe, are expected to play a significant role in shaping trade dynamics. Total trade deficit (goods and services combined) spiked to double-digit levels in July 2025, to USD 11.72 billion, vis-a-vis USD 2.57 billion last month. —ANI

Foreign investors dump equities worth Rs 21K cr

The total outflow by FPIs in equities reached Rs 1.16L cr

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Foreign investors offloaded Indian equities worth nearly Rs 21,000 crore in the first half of August, pressured by US-India trade tensions, lacklustre first-quarter corporate earnings, and a weakening rupee.

With this, the total outflow by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in equities reached the Rs 1.16 lakh crore mark so far in 2025, according to data with the depositories.

The FPI activity will be influenced by the action on the tariff front ahead.

The recent easing of tensions between the US and Russia, coupled with the absence of fresh sanctions, suggests that the proposed 25 per cent secondary tariff on India is unlikely to take effect after 27 August, a clear positive for the market, Vaqarjaved Khan, CFA - Senior Fundamental Analyst, Angel One, said.

Also, S&P has upgraded India's credit rating from BBB- to BBB, a move that could further boost FPIs' sentiment, he added.

According to the depositories data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) withdrew a net sum of Rs 20,975 crore from equities this month, till 14 August.

This came after a net withdrawal of Rs 17,741 crore in July.

Before that, FPIs invested Rs 38,673 crore in the preceding three months from March to June.

"The sustained outflows are being driven primarily by a confluence of global uncertainties. Heightened geopolitical tensions and ambiguity surrounding the interest rate trajectory in developed economies, particularly the United States, have contributed to a risk-averse sentiment," Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

On the sectoral front, sustained selling in IT stocks has pulled the IT index down. However, banking and financials continue to be relatively resilient due to fair valuations and institutional buying.

On the other hand, FPIs invested Rs 4,469 crore in the debt general limit, and pumped Rs 232 crore into the debt voluntary retention route during the period under review. *—PTI*

Mcap of 5 top firms climbs Rs 60.6K cr

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

The combined market valuation of five of the top-10 most valued firms increased by Rs 60,675.94 crore last week, with State Bank of India and HDFC Bank emerging as the lead gainers in line with a positive trend in equities.

From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India and Infosys saw an addition in their valuation, while Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and Bajaj Finance faced erosion from their market capitalisation (mcap).

The valuation of State Bank of India jumped Rs 20,445.82 crore to Rs 7,63,095.16 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. The mcap of HDFC Bank surged Rs 14,083.51 crore to Rs 15,28,387.09 crore. Infosys added Rs 9,887.17 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 6,01,310.19 crore. Mcap of Bharti Airtel surged to Rs 10,68,260.92 crore.

Reliance Industries' valuation went up to Rs 18,59,023.43 crore. *—PTI*

India welcomed the summit talks between US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin **PHOTO: PTI**

'GST reforms & Alaska summit to drive markets'

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Plans for big bang reforms in the GST regime by Diwali, the Putin-Trump summit and S&P upgrading India's sovereign credit rating are likely to instil optimism in the domestic equity market in the week ahead, analysts said.

Besides, trends in global markets and trading activity of foreign investors would also impact domestic investors' sentiment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced plans for big bang reforms in GST regime by Diwali, which will bring down prices of everyday items, as his government looks to overhaul the eight-year-old tax structure plagued by compliance issues, evasions and litigation.

Meanwhile, India on Saturday welcomed the summit talks between US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Alaska that ended without a ceasefire deal. After an almost-three-hour meeting with the Russian president, Trump said, "Some great progress" has been made, but did not provide details.

S&P on Thursday upgraded India's sovereign credit rating to 'BBB' with a stable outlook after over 18 years, citing robust economic growth, political commitment to fiscal consolidation and 'conducive' monetary policy to check inflation. "Another positive factor, which can influence FII behaviour, is the rating agency S&P raising India's credit rating from BBB- to BBB," VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Last week, Sensex climbed 739.87 points or 0.92 per cent, and Nifty edged higher by 268 points or 1.10 per cent. *—PTI*

Used cooking oil to produce aviation fuel, says Indian Oil

NEW DELHI, 7 AUG

SAF, a low-carbon alternative to conventional jet fuel, can cut lifecycle emissions and be blended up to 50 per cent with ATF **PHOTO: INDIANOIL**

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has become the first Indian company to secure global certification to produce sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) from used cooking oil. Its Panipat refinery in Haryana has received the ISCC CORSIA certification from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), chairman Arvinder Singh Sahney confirmed.

The refinery will start producing 35,000 tonnes of SAF annually by the end of 2025, which will be sufficient to meet India's mandated 1 per cent blending of SAF in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) for international airlines from 2027. SAF, a low-carbon alternative to conventional jet fuel, can cut lifecycle emissions and be blended up to 50 per cent with ATF.

Explaining the process, Sahney said used cooking oil discarded by hotels, restaurants, and food companies will be collected and supplied to the Panipat refinery for conversion into jet fuel. At present, much of this oil is exported, though India has significant untapped potential if collection networks are expanded to smaller users.

Parallelly, IOC has commissioned a Rs 5,000 crore Butyl Acrylate plant at its Koyali refinery in Gujarat to reduce dependence on imports of key raw material for paints. It has also awarded a contract to L&T for building India's largest green hydrogen plant at Panipat, with a capacity of 10,000 tonnes per year, due in just over two years.

"These initiatives reinforce IOC's leadership in green energy, innovation, and sustainability, while helping India progress towards its net-zero target," he said. *—PTI*

India's foreign exchange reserves surge to $693.6B

MUMBAI, 17 AUG

India's foreign exchange reserves have increased by USD 4.747 billion to USD 693.618 billion for the week ending 8 August. This rise is attributed to gains in foreign currency assets and gold holdings, as reported by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its latest 'Weekly Statistical Supplement'.

The previous week saw a significant decline of USD 9.32 billion in reserves. Despite fluctuations, forex reserves are nearing the all-time high of USD 704.89 billion achieved in September 2024. RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra noted, "foreign exchange kitty was sufficient to meet 11 months of country's imports."

RBI data indicates that foreign currency assets dominate the reserves at USD 583.979 billion, while gold reserves total USD 86.160 billion. As of 2025, there has been a cumulative increase of around USD 53 billion. RBI manages liquidity by buying and selling dollars to stabilise rupee. *—PTI*

GST on auto to resolve classification disputes

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

In upcoming sweeping reforms, the GST on automobiles - currently in the highest tax bracket - will be restructured to resolve classification disputes related to engine capacity and vehicle size, ultimately benefiting the common man, according to government sources.

Presently, automobiles are taxed at 28 per cent, which is the highest GST slab. A compensation cess, ranging from 1 to 22 per cent, is levied on top of this rate, depending on the type of vehicle.

The total tax incidence on cars, depending on engine capacity and length, ranges from 29 per cent for small petrol cars to 50 per cent for SUVs.

Electric vehicles are taxed at a 5 per cent rate.

A lower GST rate will boost demand and sales, as cars will become affordable. Thereby boosting consumption, a key idea behind the GST overhaul proposal mooted by the Centre.

The Centre's proposal, which includes doing away with the 12 and 28 per cent slab, will be discussed by the Group of Ministers (GoM) on GST rate rationalisation on 21 August. *—PTI*

Workplace bullying stifles creativity: IIM study

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

A study conducted by the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow has revealed that workplace bullying and negative behaviours, such as exclusion and humiliation, significantly hinder creative thinking among employees, affecting their willingness to engage in innovative side projects. The research highlights how employees often resort to developing secret, self-initiated ideas without management knowledge, only presenting them once they yield significant results.

Utilising a mixed-method approach, the researchers collected data from 112 participants in experimental scenarios and surveyed 313 employees within IT-enabled companies. "Our study sheds light on how subtle forms of workplace mistreatment can silently erode employees' creative potential. Organisations must foster an environment marked by support, respect, and open dialogue to unlock true innovation," stated Rishab Chauhan, a PhD scholar at IIM Lucknow.

The findings suggest that workplace bullying significantly reduces the likelihood of employees pursuing innovative projects and drains their "relational energy," which is derived from feeling supported and recognised.

The research received the "Best Paper in Proceedings Award" at the 85th Academy of Management Conference held in Copenhagen. *—PTI*

Samsung starts production of laptops in Noida factory

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

Korean electronics major Samsung has started production of laptops in India at its Greater Noida factory, sources aware of development said.

Samsung has been making feature phones, smartphones, wearables, and tablets at its Greater Noida factory.

"Samsung has expanded its manufacturing portfolio. It has started manufacturing laptops in India at its Greater Noida factory. It has plans to start manufacturing more devices in the country," a source told PTI.

Union electronics and IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, after a meeting with Samsung Southwest Asia President and CEO JB Park, and Samsung Southwest Asia Corporate Vice President SP Chun, had said that "Samsung continues to expand manufacturing of its advanced technology devices in Bharat, driven by talent and innovation."

Earlier this year, Samsung Electronics President and Head of Mobile eXperience (MX) Business TM Roh had shared that it has started preparation for manufacturing laptops in India. *—PTI*

Monsoon, intense competition impacted paint firms growth

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

PHOTO: FREEPIK

The early arrival of the monsoon this year and intense competition from new market entrants with aggressive pricing adversely impacted the June quarter earnings of leading paint makers.

However, the top four listed paint makers, including Asian Paints, Berger Paints, Kansai Nerolac Paints and Akzo Nobel India, reported some sequential improvement, especially from the urban market, along with improvement in sales realisation due to price rise.

Moreover, as Diwali is slightly ahead compared to last year, paint manufacturers expect a better performance in August and September.

Asian Paints, the largest company in the sector, said the early monsoon was a bit of a dampener, which affected some of its business.

On a standalone basis, which mainly includes domestic numbers, Asian Paints' revenue from sales slipped 1.19 per cent to Rs 7,848.83 crore in the June quarter.

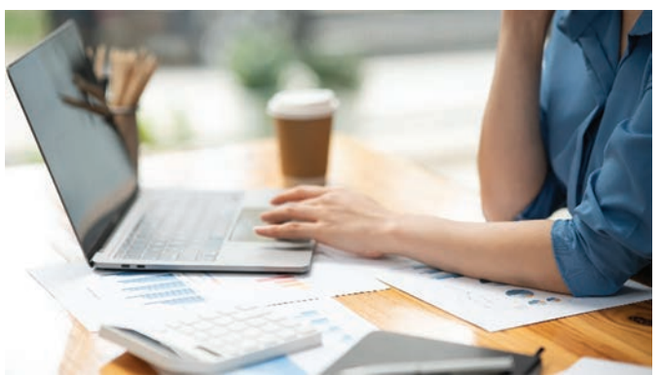
Berger Paints recorded a 'mid-single digit' volume growth in the June quarter.

The Indian paint industry, which is estimated to be around Rs 75,000 crore, is led by Asian Paints. *—PTI*

COMPARED TO MEN

'Businesswomen struggle in securing loans'

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG



The study conducted has been published in the prestigious journal 'Applied Economics' **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

Women entrepreneurs face disadvantage in securing formal loans compared to men indicating a gender gap in access to credit, a research by Goa Institute of Management (GIM) has found and recommended that digital technology can help narrow down this gap.

The study conducted has been published in the prestigious journal "Applied Economics".

The researchers investigated the data on women-owned enterprises in the unorganised sector. They studied the borrowing by these enterprises from banks, government institutions and similar formal sources of finance.

According to officials, the data sample they studied comprised more than 4 lakh unorganised sector firms, and drawn from the 2022-23 round of National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE).

The researchers found clear evidence of a gender gap in access to credit. The research team also found that when women-owned enterprises in the unorganised sector use digital technology such as internet banking and other financial services, it helps reduce the gender gap in access to credit.

While various research in the past have explored challenges faced by women-owned enterprises in accessing formal credit, this research goes further and explores the approaches that could be taken to overcome these challenges.

The researchers have recommended that banking supervision policies and practices could be re-examined with the specific goal of reducing gender disparity in access to formal credit.

Secondly, special schemes could be designed, and government funds allocated, to promote the use of digital technology for women-owned enterprises in the unorganised sector. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Aditi Ashok shoots season-best round of 65

PORTLAND, 17 AUG

Aditi Ashok sank seven birdies to produce her best round of the season, a card of 65 that carried her into the top-5 after the third round of The Standard Portland Classic on the LPGA Tour, here. Aditi, who had played only 12 events on the Tour before this week, has had only one top-10 this season, a Tied-9th position at Riviera Maya Open at Mayakoba. Starting birdie-birdie on the first two, she added three in a row from the sixth to the eighth. Then came another back-to-back birdie pair on the 13th and he 14th for a 7-under 65 after 69-70 on the first two days. Gurleen Kaur (65-68-70) at 13-under was fourth, and Savannah Grewal (69-67-72) was 8-under and T-25. —*PTI*

ICC mourns Bob's death, remembers his contributions

DUBAI, 17 AUG

The ICC on Sunday condoled the passing of former Australia captain Bob Simpson, highlighting his contributions as a player, captain, and coach during the team's rise to the pinnacle of world cricket in the 1990s. Simpson, one of the most influential figures in Australian cricket, died on Saturday at the age of 89. In a statement, ICC chairman Jay Shah praised Simpson's contributions and said he would be long remembered. "Bob Simpson was one of the true greats of our sport, and it is deeply saddening to learn of his passing. His legacy is immense. As a player, captain, and later as a coach, he shaped Australian cricket and inspired the global game," Shah said in the statement.—*PTI*

Joakim names squad for SAFF U-17 Women's C'ship

NEW DELHI, 17 AUG

India U-17 women's team head coach Joakim Alexandersson on Sunday named a 23-member squad for the SAFF U-17 Championship to be played in Thimphu, Bhutan, from 20 to 31 August. Alexandersson, who historically guided the India U-20s to their first AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup qualification in two decades earlier this month, will now lead the U-17s as they gear up for the SAFF Championship in the lead-up to the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup Qualifiers, which will be held in October in the Kyrgyz. In a new format that will provide the players more game time, the SAFF U-17 Women's Championship will feature four teams India, Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Teenager Krish Tyagi only Indian in US Open Juniors

DUBAI, 17 AUG

Kriish Tyagi has made it to Wimbledon and the Australian Open, but the break in the Big Apple will be big for the Indian teenager. However, he dismisses the pressure factor. "No pressure as the only Indian in the US Open Junior Tennis Championships." The 18-year-old has been supported by the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association as a part of their junior development programme. He will participate in the ITF J300 before taking part in the US Open Junior C'ships. The Karnataka teen has had his share of challenges. Firstly, he switched sports and took up swimming at the age of 10. The result, though, came in quick time because of dedication.—*PTI*

Bumrah available for AC 2025 selection

Asia Cup begins on 9 September in UAE

India's pace ace Jasprit Bumrah *PHOTO: PTI*

DUBAI, 17 AUG

Amidst speculation and concerns about his workload, India's pace ace Jasprit Bumrah has reportedly made himself available for the upcoming Asia Cup, which begins on 9 September in the United Arab Emirates.

Bumrah featured in just three of the five Tests against England during the recently concluded Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy series to manage his workload, but was still India's most effective bowler with 14 wickets at an average of 26.00.

The 31-year-old has been used sparingly by India, particularly in white-ball cricket, and his last international appearance in the shortest format was the T20 World Cup final against South Africa in June last year.

He also hasn't featured in One-Day International cricket since India's World Cup final defeat to Australia in November 2023.

Bumrah was ruled out of this year's Champions Trophy due to a lower-back injury, which he sustained while bowling in the fifth Test against Australia in Sydney in January.

The senior selection committee, helmed by former India fast bowler Ajit Agarkar, is expected to meet in Mumbai on Tuesday to pick India's 15-member squad for the Asia Cup, which will be played in the T20 format this time around. —*PTI*

There is a need to clarify the right things: Ashwin

Senior spinner R Ashwin has clarified his statement about the signing of Dewald Brevis by Chennai Super Kings, asserting that his focal point was the South African's batting performance and not the price at which he was acquired midway through IPL 2025. A controversy erupted when Ashwin, currently in the CSK roster, hinted in his YouTube channel that the five-time IPL champions were willing to pay "extra" to avail Brevis' services. His comments forced the IPL franchise to issue a clarification. "My intent in the old video was to talk about Brevis' batting, not about his IPL signing amount.

UAE TRI-SERIES TOO

Babar Azam and Mohammed Rizwan *PHOTO: PTI*

No Azam and Rizwan in Pak's Asia Cup team

LAHORE, 17 AUG

Pakistan on Sunday left out seasoned batters Babar Azam and Mohammed Rizwan while announcing their 17-member squad for the Asia Cup and the preceding tri-series in the UAE later this month.

Babar and Rizwan, who helped Pakistan to their first-ever win over India in an ICC tournament in the 2021 T20 World Cup in the UAE, have been away from the format for a while.

Both Babar and Rizwan made their last appearance in the shortest formats in December 2024.

In the lead-up to the Asia Cup, which will be played in T20 format in the UAE from 9 September, the Salman Ali Agha-led side will play a tri-series against Afghanistan and the hosts UAE at Sharjah from 29 August to 7 September.

Babar played nicely in the first ODI but missed out on the next two," Hesson told reporters during a media interaction.

"There's no doubt Babar's been asked to improve in some areas around taking on spin and in terms of his strike rate. Those are things he's working hard on." "But at the moment, the players we have have done exceptionally well. Sahibzada Farhan has played six games and won three Player of the Match awards," he said.

Pakistan is placed along with arch-rivals India in Group A, also featuring the UAE and Oman, in the eight-team Asia Cup tournament, which will conclude on 28 September.

Pakistan squad:
Salman Ali Agha (c), Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Hasan Nawaz, Hussain Talat, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Haris (wk), Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Waseem Jnr, Sahibzada, Saim Ayub, Salman Mirza, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim. —*PTI*

Eberechi Eze *PHOTO: X/@EZE*

CRYSTAL PALACE HOLD CHELSEA TO GOALLESS DRAW

LONDON, 17 AUG

Eberechi Eze was denied a brilliant free-kick goal and a potential fairytale ending in what could be his final Premier League appearance for Crystal Palace in a goalless draw at Chelsea.

The midfielder, 27, was a doubt for selection amid ongoing talks with Tottenham, but started for the visitors at Stamford Bridge and powered home a free-kick from 20 yards in the 13th minute.

However, the strike was ruled out by referee Darren England after a VAR check because Palace defender Marc Guehi - also linked with a move away to Liverpool - was within one metre of Chelsea's wall when the free-kick was taken.

The rule, which has been in place since 2019, is rarely applied but cost Palace, who missed further chances through striker Jean-Philippe Mateta and Maxence Lacroix, and were the better team earlier on.

Chelsea celebrated becoming world champions over the summer before kick-off, but delivered a flat first-half display. Their best chances fell to substitute debutants Estevao Willian, Liam Delap, and Andrey Santos after the break. —*PTI*

DOORS ARE OPEN FOR CHHETRI: JAMIL

BENGALURU, 17 AUG

Newly-appointed India head coach Khalid Jamil on Sunday cleared the air about the leaving out of talismanic striker Sunil Chhetri from the CAFA Nations Cup national camp, saying it was just a preparatory tournament for the crucial Asian Cup qualifying round matches in October.

Jamil, who succeeded Manolo Marquez as India head coach earlier this month, on Friday named 35 probables for the upcoming CAFA Nations Cup in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with Chhetri missing from the list.

Jamil did not say in so many words, but made it clear that Chhetri is expected to walk into the national team for the Asian Cup qualifying round matches against Singapore on October 9 (away) and October 14 (home)."He (Chhetri) is not there in this camp because we are playing a tournament which will essentially serve as a preparation for our Asian Cup Qualifiers," Jamil said on the second day of the national camp here."I also want to try out a few other players during this FIFA window.

I had a talk with him about the same. It's always a pleasure to have a player like him on the team, and the door is always open for him."Sunil is a legend of Indian football. I have played against him, I've seen him play on numerous occasions, and he is one of my favourite players. —*PTI*

Khalid Jamil *PHOTO: PTI*

CINCINNATI OPEN

Sinner ends Atmane's dream; Alcaraz beats Alexander Zverev

CINCINNATI, 17 AUG

Top seed and defending champion Jannik Sinner, playing on his 24th birthday, ended French qualifier Terence Atmane's dream run at the Cincinnati Open with a 7-6(4), 6-2 win on Sunday to reach the final of the U.S. Open tune-up event.

In the other semifinal, Carlos Alcaraz advanced with a 6-4, 6-3 win over German third seed Alexander Zverev, who struggled physically during the match, to set up a rematch of this year's French Open and Wimbledon finals. Sinner won a remarkable 91% of his first-serve points, did not face a single break point during the 86-minute match, and converted two of five break points in his first career meeting with world number 136 Atmane."Very, very tough challenge," Sinner said on court after being serenaded with "Happy Birthday" by the crowd."Whenever you play against someone completely new, it's very difficult," he added. From there, the Italian never looked back. The reigning U.S. Open, Australian Open, and Wimbledon champion opened the second set with a nine-minute hold of serve, then held to love before finally breaking for a 3-1 lead that gave him the cushion he needed. —*PTI*

Jannik Sinnerm and Carlos Alcaraz *PHOTO: X/@CINCINNATI OPEN*

Anahat retires hurt in Bega Open final

BEGA, 17 AUG

Young Indian squash player Anahat Singh was forced to retire hurt against her Egyptian opponent Habiba Hani in the final of the NSW Squash Bega Open, here on Sunday.

The top-seeded 17-year-old Indian retired when she was trailing 1-2 and was down 4-10 in the fourth game against second-seed Habiba Hani. The final scoreline read 9-11, 11-5, 11-8, 10-4 retd in favour of the Egyptian. Anahat, playing her maiden World Events final, took the opening game 11-9, but Hani bounced back to win the next two 11-5 and 11-8. Anahat had overcome a strong challenge from Nour. —*PTI*

Marc Marquez wins Austrian Grand Prix

PARIS, 17 AUG

Six-time MotoGP champion Marc Marquez marked the 1,000th premier class race in history by winning the Austrian Grand Prix for the first time in his career to take a 142-point lead over his brother Alex in the championship.

Not since 2014 had Marquez claimed six Grand Prix wins in a row as he inches closer to a seventh MotoGP crown with nine rounds left.

Having won Saturday's sprint from the second row, Marquez claimed the sprint-race double for the sixth Grand Prix in a row, with the Spaniard unbeaten since the British Grand Prix in May.

Gresini Racing rookie Fermin Aldeguer found late race pace to finish second, while Aprilia's pole sitter Marco Bezzecchi finished third. Alex Marquez finished 10th after serving a long-lap penalty.

"Super, super happy to finally take the first victory here in Austria," Marquez said. "I'm happy with six victories in a row, but I need to keep focus; next week we have another race." —*PTI*

Healy's 137 powers Australia A to a win over India A

BRISBANE, 17 AUG

Star wicketkeeper-batter Alyssa Healy blazed away to an unbeaten 137 as Australia A picked up a consolatory nine-wicket win in the inconsequential third women's ODI against India A here on Sunday.

India had already sealed the three-match series 2-0 after a two-wicket win in the second game on Friday, having also edged the opener by three wickets. Opting to bat first, India rode on opener Shafali Verma's 52 and wicketkeeper Yastika Bhatia's 54-ball 42 to post 216 before being bowled out in 47.4 overs. Australia A skipper Tahlia McGrath was the pick of the bowlers with 3/49 in eight overs.

Chasing 217, the spotlight belonged to Healy (137 not out off 84 balls), who made light work of the target, punishing the Indian bowlers to all parts of a ground named after her uncle and former Australian wicketkeeping great Ian Healy. The keeper-batter found an able partner in Tahlia Wilson, who played with composure and fluency for her 59. —*PTI*

Alyssa Healy *PHOTO: X/@CRIC-AUS*

Sinquefield Cup: Gukesh in familiar territory, Praggs aims for podium

ST LOUIS, 17 AUG

World Champion D Gukesh returns to classical chess after a brief hiatus to face a star-studded field at the Sinquefield Cup starting Monday, while R Praggnanandhaa will eye a podium finish in the fifth leg of the Grand Chess Tour to strengthen his overall fifth-place standing.

While many argue that the field feels incomplete without world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen, the Norwegian Grandmaster has openly admitted that he no longer enjoys classical chess.

Without Carlsen, the GCT was announced, and this is the culmination point wherein the players would qualify for the grand finale slated later this year.

Praggnanandhaa and D Gukesh *PHOTO: PTI*

Fabiano Caruana of the United States, Alireza Firouzja from France, and in-form Armenian-turned-American Levon Aronian are most likely to pose a stiff challenge for the Indian duo, but the rest of the field is also quite impressive, as all nine selected players for the Grand Chess Tour for this year will compete together.

Given his current form in a faster version, Gukesh may not be one of the favourites here, but one should be reminded that classical chess is the Indian GM's forte.—*PTI*

RETURN FROM INJURY

Magic of Lionel Messi and a stunning goal

FORT LAUDERDALE, 17 AUG

Lionel Messi returned from injury for Inter Miami to chants of "Messi! Messi! Messi!" in a 3-1 win over the LA Galaxy.

It was the magic defender Maximiliano Falcón said the team has come to expect. "We're used to this. You saw what he did, got the ball with a clear look at goal and scored," Falcón said in Spanish.

Even after a two-game absence, it was no surprise that Messi, MLS's top goal scorer, led Inter Miami to victory. He had been training with the team since midweek, and coach Javier Mascherano confirmed he would be available for the weekend match.

The Argentine superstar put in a 45-minute shift, and his countryman Rodrigo de Paul assisted him as they beat the worst team in MLS. The two world champions did not participate in pregame warmups, but they did warm up before they entered the game at halftime to the raucous cheers of Miami fans.

Messi injured his hamstring on Aug. 2 against Necaxa in a Leagues Cup match. Inter Miami reached the Leagues Cup quarterfinals without him, but were defeated by in-state rivals Orlando City 4-1 in MLS action. Besides his ability, it's Messi's competitive attitude that transcends this Miami squad, according to Mascherano.

"He wants to play every single game. He wanted to play in Orlando, also. You have to understand why Leo is Leo, because he always wants to be on the pitch," Mascherano said after the win over Galaxy.

Messi's return comes at an important time, before his squad takes on eight-time Mexican champions Tigres UANL in South Florida on Wednesday. —*PTI*

Lionel Messi *PHOTO: PTI*

Evie Parts has sued NCAA

WASHINGTON, 17 AUG

Long-distance runner Evie Parts has sued the NCAA and Swarthmore College as well as members of its athletic department, saying they illegally removed her from the track team because she is a transgender athlete. Parts' lawsuit said the NCAA's ban on transgender athletes in women's sports did not have legal grounds because it's not a governmental organization and therefore does not have jurisdiction over Pennsylvania state law or the Title IX federal statute. She was removed from the team on 6 Feb. the day the NCAA issued its new policy on transgender athletes. —*PTI*